

# THE FRENCH POLITICAL SYSTEM

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BY

W. L. MIDDLETON

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NEW YORK

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## P R E F A C E

THE aim of this book is to describe the French Parliamentary system in actual working. Following a historical introduction, Chapters II to IX are devoted to this essential purpose, to which Chapter X, dealing with the Press, may also be regarded as contributing in a certain degree. In such a description, however, reference is necessarily and frequently made to the questions with which Parliament is principally concerned. As it is possible that some readers may not be closely acquainted with all these questions and with their particular incidence in French politics, it seemed advisable to give some account of them, and this is done in Chapters XI to XIV. It is not pretended that these later chapters are exhaustive and, while they are written objectively, it is not necessary for their purpose of simple explanation that the reader should agree with the opinions expressed.

W. L. M.



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## CHAPTER I

### THE UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

THERE are still to be found, here and there, persons who doubt the political stability of France. The Third Republic has endured for more than fifty years. It has survived the tremendous test of the European war. It has multiplied the area of the French Colonial Empire by ten. In spite of these achievements, which would seem to bear the mark of solidity, sceptics are not entirely reassured.

Even since the war, say the doubters, there has been an *alerte*. Many observers watched the monetary crisis of a few years ago with a certain ironic expectancy. They saw Parliament floundering lamentably amid its difficulties and, in 1926, going to the very brink of failure. They marked the renewed vigour of the reactionary parties, obviously bent on making the most of a Heaven-sent opportunity. The rise of semi-Fascist organisations, the one novelty of the occasion, made them wonder whether France would go the way of Italy. Even the demonstrations of the *Action Française* assumed a fresh interest. Was it not murmured that the Duchesse de Guise had shown herself at the window of an hotel overlooking the Tuileries, and had been saluted by young Royalists with the daring cry of "Vive la Reine!"? Rumours went about, too, that a wealthy owner of newspapers had taken in



hand the education of the heir of the Bonapartes, who was to be publicly produced as soon as a capricious and exasperated people should be ready to acclaim another *coup d'état*.

These flickerings of the embers of lost causes were, however, more picturesque than impressive. Few seriously think that French history can still be conveniently dramatised as a conflict between Republic, Monarchy and Empire, the seemingly eternal triangle of the nineteenth century. The very terms of that easy formula have changed their meaning. The Republic of to-day is not the Republic of 1875. Monarchism, as conceived by the *Action Française*, is something very different from the old sentimental Royalism of Brittany and Vendée. The historic questions of régime are dissolved in new controversies. Above all, the social revolutionary movement, aiming at an economic transformation of the State, has altered the aspect of the Republic both for Republicans and for their opponents. The lingering scepticism as to the security of the Republic is probably due not so much to the incidents of the day as to the disquieting record of the past. Europe remains under the impression of the kaleidoscopic changes of a hundred and forty years. It has not forgotten the numerous constitutional experiments and the apparent docility which they were in turn accepted and rejected. The notion of France as a victim of fatal caprice has almost hardened into an obsession. People are still looking for convincing evidence that the country has settled down.

No *a priori* impression of the fickleness or levity of French politics should be allowed to discourage the study

of so serious and original an enterprise as the setting up of a Parliamentary Republic. After all, France has been the main interpreter for Europe of the letter and spirit of Parliamentary institutions. Yet the profoundly interesting developments of the last fifty years have sometimes been discussed by English writers with tolerant superiority rather than with sympathetic understanding. We are looking on at the latest phase—perhaps the last phase—of the vast transition from absolutism to representative government which was begun in 1789. The process may seem slow and too often interrupted by accidents. But those who watch it with a half-smile, holding a sneaking belief in the racial capacity of the French for politics, might easily find a not too remote parallel to the troubled history. Nearly two centuries of struggle marked the progress of Great Britain towards modern Parliamentarism after the Great Rebellion of 1642. The dictatorship of Cromwell, the Restoration, the new Monarchy of 1688, the Jacobite revolts, the corrupt government of the eighteenth century, the Reform Act all came to help or hinder the long evolution. It was not until well in the nineteenth century that full Cabinet government, with Ministers responsible to Parliament, was thoroughly established. The triumph of representative institutions in Great Britain was separated from the Great Rebellion by a wider stretch of time than that which divides the France of to-day from the Great Revolution.

This point of chronology is not merely academic. It has a direct bearing on present politics. There is a special sense in which it was a misfortune for France that the Great Revolution occurred so late in her

history. The destruction of the *ancien régime* coincided with the beginning of the industrial revolution, which was before long to bring every country in Europe face to face with no less formidable a problem than the reorganisation of society. The coincidence was disastrous. If absolutism had been overthrown in 1689 instead of 1789 the new Constitutional foundations would have been firmly established before the modern collectivist ideas became a powerful force in politics. The social movement might thus have been absorbed without shock in the free play of settled democratic institutions. But the agitation for a total economic transformation of society first reached dangerous proportions in France in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, at a time when the whole question of the political régime was still in momentous dispute. There is scarcely any exaggeration in saying that it destroyed the Republic of 1848. It divided the Republicans. It frightened the bourgeois and the thrifty as much as Bolshevism alarms their successors of to-day. Louis Napoleon succeeded in his *coup d'état*, partly by the magic of a name, but more because he offered the protection of authority against the monster of Socialism, exactly as Mussolini, at a similarly well-chosen moment, provided the Italian bourgeois with a guarantee against Bolshevism. On the collapse of the Second Empire the Republicans had not merely to reconstruct the shattered framework of government; they had also to face the unsolved problem of the social movement. To be fairly judged the Third Republic must be regarded as the hybrid product of two distinct revolutions going on at the same time,

The purely political revolution presented difficulties enough. The new régime had to dominate or conciliate rivals which, though in disgrace, were by no means negligible. In the Chamber of Deputies of 1877 Bonapartism had a hundred representatives and Royalism well over fifty. If the Constitutional struggle alone had filled the history of the last fifty years the political physiognomy of France would be more easily discernible than it is, but it would still be complex. In the first days of the Republic both the main parties in the State were in unnatural positions. The situation bore some resemblance to that described by Macaulay as existing in England after the accession of the Hanoverian dynasty. The French Republicans were, like the English Whigs, the advance guard of liberty, but events had made them the party of government and the upholders of authority. The French Monarchists, as much predisposed as the English Tories to be the party of Constitutional order, could only be hostile to a Government which was the offspring of a revolution. Time and patience were needed to straighten out this paradox. It was a process which demanded freedom from external disturbance, and above all freedom from any other political pre-occupation of the first magnitude.

But the social movement did not remain stationary. With its portentous growth the confusion already existing became worse confounded. The economic question, raised in an acute and fundamental form, cut across the question of régime. It challenged and shook all the parties alike. Men everywhere were asked to decide, not merely whether they were Republicans or not, but whether they were Conservatives or social

reformers. The nation was split up on two different and competing principles of division. The Constitutional issues divided it in one manner, the social question in another. It is not surprising that half a century of progress has been insufficient wholly to dissipate the mist of ambiguity which thus descended on French politics. Complexities were too real and too deeply founded to permit a rapid simplification. Throughout the history of the Republic the two movements have remained rivals, uneasily intertwining, thwarting each other, undermining parties and repeatedly diverting the apparently settled course of political evolution.

Until late in the 'eighties the confusion was almost paralysing. There were extensive regions which the social movement was slow to reach, some of which, indeed, it has scarcely touched to this day. The semi-feudal West remained rooted, politically and economically, in the life of the *ancien régime*. The rural South, a stronghold of Republicanism, was for a long time indifferent, or rather, perhaps, hostile, to the new notions concerning the reorganisation of society. There were large towns, on the other hand, where arguments about the régime rapidly ceased to have any point and the social issue was the only one that counted.

In these early days the most visible effects of the challenge of Socialism were produced on the Republican parties. The Republicans of 1875 included within their ranks representatives of the most diverse tendencies of opinion. There were men whose temperament or social interests made them Conservatives, and who believed with old Thiers that "the Republic will be Conservative or there will be no Republic." ("La

République sera conservatrice ou ne sera pas.”) There were reformers imbued with the active and generous idealism of the Revolution. On the extreme Left wing, so extreme as scarcely to come within Parliamentary politics at all, were the young and ardent groups attracted by collectivism and an entirely new conception of the State. Leaving altogether out of account the Royalists and Bonapartists, the Republic from the beginning presented in embryo the full range of parties proper to the constitution of a body politic.

Although the social problem was by no means the sole origin of the sects among the Republicans, it increasingly coloured and emphasised their divisions. The Conservative-minded did their best to ignore the question. Puriſt doctrinaires of the *laissez-faire* school regarded it as an intruder without right of entry into the province of politics. All the groups which formed the governing majority were opposed to any considerable or regular intervention of the State in economic matters. Even among those who voted for specific reforms—such as Waldeck-Rousseau’s Act of 1884, which gave trade unions a legal status—many did so reluctantly, trembling with fear lest they should be encouraging the general doctrine of collectivism. It was not long before a man like Jules Ferry, an unimpeachable Republican and the founder of free education, came to be regarded as a moderate of the moderates. In a moment of impatience with the extreme Left, Ferry indeed allowed himself to say that “the Monarchist peril no longer exists, but another has succeeded it.” That declaration proclaimed the birth of a Republican Conservatism. But it was a Conservatism fatally incapable of alliance

with the other Conservative forces of the nation. It was separated by the whole breadth of the question of régime from the Royalists and Bonapartists who, on the social question alone, might have been its allies.

At this time the collectivist movement itself was not even definitely, or at least avowedly, Republican. Many of its early apostles were as anxious to remain outside Parliamentary politics as the principal Republican leaders were determined to keep them out. For them the social transformation was the only thing that mattered; politics, of a singularly different kind, would come later, when the new world was made. The recurring crises which agitated the parties, the question of the Church, the very question of the régime, were so many distractions which put off the day of the economic revolution. Events showed that this excessive doctrinairism was not shared by the bulk of the working classes, but until that fact was demonstrated the attitude of the Socialists was a constant menace to the Republic. Even at elections the divisions among the Republicans and Socialists were dangerously maintained. In 1885 the Republicans were actually in a minority on the first ballot, though the second redressed the balance.

Uncompromising Royalists and Bonapartists, the earlier *ralliés* who accepted the régime, Republican Moderates who dared not ally themselves with the *ralliés*, Republican Liberals who feared Socialism only less than they hated Monarchism, Radical-Socialists who ranged themselves on the Left on both the political and the social issue, Socialists who were only half-hearted Republicans: such was the confused array of parties resulting from the distracting rivalry of the two principles which, simul-

taneously but in different ways, divided the nation. Forces at once so strong, so conflicting and so variable in their points of application could not, as the physicists say, have a clear resultant. With indecisive groupings of public opinion there could not be definition or cohesion in Parliamentary parties. A tolerable order could be evolved only when the two main tendencies, the political and the social, were brought on to a sufficient area of common ground. Each had to yield something to the other. Republicanism and anti-Republicanism had to incorporate in their principles a certain amount of social doctrine. Socialism had to graft Republicanism on the stern tree of economic theory.

In this process of simplification the failure of the Boulangist movement in 1889 marks the first definite stage. Ostensibly General Boulanger was the leader of a popular revolt against a Parliament momentarily discredited by signal incompetence and stained by financial scandals. In reality he became the standard-bearer of the enemies of the Republic. Sheer opportunism brought to his support the heterogeneous forces of the Royalists and Bonapartists. It was a common opinion at the time that if Boulanger, on the night of his triumphal election as Deputy for Paris, had walked the few hundred yards from the Durand restaurant to the Elysée, the Republic would have fallen. There is little to be gained in discussing what might have come of a victory which Boulanger's belated scruples or his pusillanimity allowed to slip from his grasp. The likeliest result was a brief and incoherent dictatorship. In any case the defeat which actually occurred was more decisive than success could have been. It consolidated



the Republic. With the sudden and ignominious collapse of the hero the Royalists and Bonapartists suffered a check from which they never recovered. They had lost a great part of their political capital in the bubble speculation. The general election which was held later in the year gave a crushing Republican majority. At no election since has the question of régime been, at least openly, the first issue. The famous Encyclical of 1892, in which Pope Leo XIII. exhorted French Catholics "to accept the civil power in the form in which it exists," was a clear recognition, from a significant quarter, of the victory of the Republic. After 1889, disaffection, though it did not cease to exist, became latent.

The failure of Boulanger hastened the disarmament of both the extremes which, in their opposite ways, threatened the political order. Bonapartists and Royalists resigned themselves to at least an opportunist acquiescence in a system of government which they were powerless to change. Their efforts were now rather turned to the defence of the Church, or of the social order, or of both together. In that part of the West which is most tenacious of historic traditions it was the religious question which took the place of the question of régime. Anti-clericalism, rather than the Republic, became the enemy. The Royalists became the party of Catholic defence. Normandy, though professedly clerical, moved towards a somewhat different form of Conservatism. The shrewd landowners and manufacturers, whose fathers had been Bonapartists, forsook a sterile quarrel for the more pressing task of protecting their economic interests against the assaults of reform.

The swing from counter-revolution to a less aggressive Conservatism in the West was neither whole-hearted nor complete, but the adherents of lost causes in effect gradually became, with whatever ultimate reservations, a party of resistance within the Republic.

At the other extreme the better half of the social movement, without abandoning its ideal, took its natural place on the Left wing of Republicanism and soon shared in the activities of Parliament. The Boulangist movement had taught its leaders a hard lesson. At the beginning of that affair some of the more fanatical among them had actually backed Boulanger, because they saw a chance of overthrowing a bourgeois Parliament; but when the crisis came, the bulk of the Socialist party rallied to the defence of the Republic. Uncompromising doctrinairism had, in fact, been defeated by the spread of the social movement itself. The Law which legalised trade unions in 1884 had opened a vast field which could never again be closed. From the moment that Parliament interested itself in the matter working men were bound to think about their relations with their employers in the polling-booth as well as in the workshop. After Boulanger working-class opinion was prepared for "Constitutional" Socialism. The Chamber of Deputies elected in 1893 contained 48 Socialists and Radical-Socialists.

By the incorporation of elements which had hitherto held aloof from its activities the Chamber became more representative of the real forces of the nation. Freed from immediate anxiety about the safety of the régime the Republican parties began to follow with less constraint the courses towards which they were guided by

natural inclination or impelled by interest. The time had come when Conservatives, Reformers and Socialists could declare themselves. By 1896 it was possible for Méline to form a Ministry which was essentially Conservative. The Government rested on the support, not only of the Republican Moderates, but of the Catholic Conservatives who had obeyed the instructions of the Pope and had agreed, more or less sincerely, to take their part in working Republican institutions. A considerable step had been taken towards political stability. Here at last was a combination of the elements of social resistance, not indeed homogeneous, but solid enough to enable the Government to live for two years, a feat of endurance which had only once before been equalled.<sup>1</sup>

Amid the later convulsions of the Affaire Dreyfus the evolution suffered a violent check. During that bewildering episode the whole order of political life was suspended. There was not, indeed, any serious attempt at counter-revolution. There was no Boulanger. The Republic was in danger, not of being overthrown by its adversaries, but of falling into anarchy. Nevertheless, a crisis of such a nature and such magnitude could not fail to reawaken the antagonisms which were latent in the body politic. Republicans and reactionaries were ranged once more on the old battle lines. Royalists and Nationalists of all shades joined in upholding, as they believed, the honour of the Army. The Bishops and *curés* threw the weight

<sup>1</sup> Rouvier's short-lived Ministry of 1887 was constructed on similar lines, but its fragility showed that a combination of the kind was then decidedly premature.

of their influence into the same scale. On the other side, Moderates who had been edging towards a more definite Conservatism were compelled to remain in the strictly Republican fold. The battle was continued, with a scarcely changed distribution of forces, during the period of anti-clerical legislation which ended with the passing of the Separation Act of 1905.

But the evolution was not interrupted for long. Its resumption was indeed made inevitable by the very nature of the forces engaged in the struggle over the religious question. For the triumphant Radical-Socialist *bloc*, the most powerful political instrument the Republic has known, was not merely anti-clerical; it contained the embryo of a coalition for social reform. The simple menace of such a development was enough to drive numerous recruits into the ranks of the Moderates as soon as the Church question ceased to be the immediate and primordial concern of politics. By the irresistible trend of interest Reaction resumed its character as a modern force existing for the defence of order and property. In the period between the passing of the Separation Act and the outbreak of war the new tendencies were accentuated. By 1914 the suspect appellations of Conservative and Nationalist had disappeared from the nomenclature of parties.

A glance at the array of parties to-day might give the impression that the social issue has, to all intents and purposes, completely displaced the old political issue. The most reactionary group in the Chamber of Deputies bears the name of the Democratic Republican Union, and its nearest neighbour is the Group of Democratic and Social Action. Along the whole range of resounding

titles the words "Social," "Democratic" and "Left" are scattered in impressive profusion. These opportunist labels bear valuable witness to the progressive change in the ground of party controversy. But no sweeping simplification has occurred. The two principles of division, the "political" and the "social," are still at cross-purposes, mingling their disparate threads like the first and second subjects in the working-out section of a symphonic movement, though with less harmony. At the present stage of transition the relations between Church and State represent the old political controversy. That issue is alive, since neither the Separation Act, as it stands, nor the body of *lois laïques* in general has been accepted by all the parties concerned as a final solution. In the crowded field of modern politics the religious question occupies a peculiar position. Deprived of its pre-eminence, it still stands apart from other disputes. It is not a subject of everyday debate like the incidence of taxation and other aspects of the social problem. But it is never entirely absent from the preoccupations of politicians and continues to influence the conformation of parties. It may properly be compared with those profound disagreements which sometimes unhappily divide a family, differences which are only occasionally mentioned but which remain the powerful secret springs of animosities, affecting the conduct of brothers and sisters in the most ordinary affairs of life.

As soon as one looks behind the names of parties to examine their real nature the ambiguity characteristic of a period of transition becomes visible. Parties apparently absorbed in the new causes are found to have within

their ranks elements drawn from the old. The Socialist party tries to treat the question of régime and all its connected controversies as dead beyond the possibility of resurrection. It is Republican, but ardently desires not to have to defend the Republic. It is anti-clerical, but severely discourages the revival of anti-clericalism. On the other hand, its natural allies, the Radical-Socialists, are the heirs of the old liberalism which made the maintenance of the Republic the first of all considerations. They range themselves with the Socialists in promoting democratic reforms, but their anti-clericalism, far from avoiding battle, is aggressive. There are two Conservatisms, the pre-Republican and the Republican. The reactionaries, the Catholics rallied to the Republic by Papal injunction, the Republican Moderates who represent the interests of property, together form on occasion a *bloc* of resistance but not a homogeneous party. It is in the Centre, however, that the crippling hesitancy between the old order and the new is most apparent. In most Parliaments there are "cross-bench" minds which cannot unreservedly take sides. But the French Centre is more peculiarly composed. A large number of the Deputies, who style themselves vaguely as Republicans of the Left, belong "politically" to the Left but "socially" to the Right. Conservative in tendency, they prefer to vote against Radical Governments. Firmly Republican and anti-clerical, they avoid permanent association with the Right.

In spite of the absence of clear-cut divisions it is possible to trace the line of demarcation which runs, like a badly drawn frontier of the Treaty of Versailles, between the *blocs* of Right and Left. The boundary

wavers, and in quiet times degenerates into a strip of "no man's land" over which neither side can claim authority, but it exists. On one side social reformers consort naturally with anti-clericals and with those who, in external affairs, would subordinate purely national policy to a broader conception of international interests. On the opposite side Nationalism in foreign affairs associates itself without difficulty with the defence of the social order. As long as the religious question remains in abeyance it is possible, as has been recently proved, to form a socially Conservative Government, though it studiously avoids the name of Conservative. But the latent religious question is always a dangerous kink in such a combination.<sup>1</sup>

Every head of a really Conservative Ministry is at pains to disguise, as far as he can, his association with the clerical reactionaries who necessarily constitute a part of his majority. It is, in fact, more difficult to set up a Government of the Right than a Government of the Left. The final proof that the passage to the new order of politics has been successfully made will not be given until it is possible, in the normal practice of Parliament, to form Governments openly depending on the Right and pursuing a frankly Conservative policy.

<sup>1</sup> The Poincaré Government of November 1928 leaned unmistakably towards Conservatism. Visitors from other countries are often surprised to learn that M. Poincaré, whose Nationalism is apparent in his foreign policy, and whose chief acts in domestic affairs have been mildly Conservative, passes in France as a man of the Left. The explanation of the paradox is that he belongs to the Left on the old classification; he is a Republican and not clerical.

The second Ministry of M. Tardieu, formed in March 1930, was, in composition, the most Conservative since that of Méline. It included several pronounced Clerical Conservatives, and that circumstance was the main cause of its fall.

Visibly, the Republic still leans to the Left. It is stronger in the convictions of its traditional adherents than in the acquiescence of the converted. It is too near the Revolution to be unfaithful to the genius of its origin. Republicanism is a prejudice in favour of democracy. It is this bias which has subdued Socialism to the Republican mould. Socialist leaders may proclaim that their movement has lost nothing of its revolutionary character, but they are really won over to the idea of progressive change through the working of democratic institutions.<sup>1</sup> If they took office they would no more tamper with the Republican order than the British Socialists have interfered with the British Constitution. It is to the other side of politics that the remains of suspicion attach. A formula attributed to Maurice Barrès laid down a significant rule of conduct for Nationalists of his way of thinking: "Let us put up with the Republic and work for France." Negatively, as deprecating further agitation against the régime, the sentence has a satisfactory ring, but there is nothing in it to match the Republican fervour of M. Herriot. In the ill-cemented Conservative *bloc* the Republicanism of the main body shades away into the Royalism of the Breton Marquises. And in spite of the ably-conducted policy of the Pope it is not easy to convince public opinion that the Vatican places the whole of its hope, unreservedly and without thought of an alternative, in the chance of obtaining a satisfactory

<sup>1</sup> In the *Populaire* of February 2, 1930, M. Léon Blum, the Socialist leader, wrote: "We know, all of us know, mark you, that the progress of Socialism is inseparable from the general progress of political evolution. We all know that Socialist gains would be dearly bought by a check to the Republican spirit."



amendment of the religious laws by action within the Republic.<sup>1</sup>

The image of France which emerges from a general survey of its politics is of a country still painfully seeking spiritual union. The Revolution is triumphant but it is incomplete. The Republic is firmly founded but it is not yet a régime which attracts the unquestioning and affectionate reverence of all citizens. No country more than France thrills with national consciousness, or makes patriotism its inspiring religion. Yet few countries betray such pathetic evidences of an unresolved discord.

A Carlylean essay in contrasts might be written about the national monuments, which plainly tell the story of revolution. Like a hostage of old Royalism the Cathedral of Saint Denis, the burial-place of the Kings, stands isolated in a Communist suburb. The building itself has the look of a once venerated personage fallen into disgrace and now ignored. Its thirteenth-century walls, militarily grim Gothic, are black with the soot of a hundred factories. Some of its external ornament is in ruins, and the arch of one of the doors is crumbling. A melancholy without charm pervades the interior, lit though it is by windows which should give the splendour

<sup>1</sup> The persistence of suspicion is illustrated by an incident which occurred in the Chamber of Deputies on January 21, 1930, during a debate on the appointment of General Weygand as Chief of the Army General Staff. Critics had accused General Weygand, a devout Catholic, of being a reactionary. In reply, M. Maginot, the Minister of War, said that after the appointment had been made the General voluntarily came to him and made the following declaration: "I am a Republican, and I cannot even conceive that there could exist for France another régime than the Republic." If it were understood by everybody as a matter of course that a General of the French Army was a Republican such a declaration would have no point.

and gaiety of a spring morning. In France, where ridicule kills, indifference as surely lets die.

A lively fancy might perceive the dead hand of Saint Denis stretched out protestingly to cast a chill shadow over the Republican Pantheon. The memorial which stands on the hill of Saint Genevieve was created in the noblest spirit to honour the memory of the great. In a France at peace with herself it would be—and perhaps will be—a place of pilgrimage for the whole nation, a refuge in which the warring sects should lay aside their arms. That ideal is still unattained. The memorial is partisan. Built by Louis XV. as a church, it shows the marks of the partisan despoiler. Like the Cathedral of Lausanne, the victim of a different revolution, it gives the impression of a House of God untenanted. In spite of the magnificence of mural paintings its noble spaces seem empty, a vast expression of negation. There is something nonconformist in its imageless sobriety. “Aux Grands Hommes La Patrie Reconnaisante”: no formula could be more hospitably national than that which is inscribed on the pediment of the Pantheon. In reality political necessity or political passion has substituted the word “République” for the word “Patrie.” It would be as easy for a camel to pass through the needle’s eye as for a devout Catholic, a declared enemy of the *lois laïques*, to enter the Pantheon, whatever services he might have rendered to France or to mankind. Voltaire and Rousseau lie there because they were the heralds of the Revolution. Lazare Carnot, the “organiser of victory” in 1792, sleeps beside the worthy Baudin, killed on the right side of a barricade in resisting the *coup d’état* of 1851. Victor Hugo is

there because he was exiled by Napoleon the Little, Zola because he wrote "J'accuse." All these were noble figures, but they were figures of battle, protagonists of the ideas for which the Republic stands. It would be idle to pretend that the whole nation followed Jaurès to the Pantheon, forgetting old quarrels and remembering only the great leader, the orator and the political philosopher.

Here is none of the atoning spirit which makes Westminster Abbey the expression of the historical unity of England, no dissolving of animosities in a vast synthesis comprising all the elements, good and bad, of a national past which in the sum is glorious. In London the three statues of Kings which are nearest St. Stephen's Palace are those of Charles I., James II. and George III., who count among the most conspicuous enemies of liberty. Even King John has a niche in the Houses of Parliament. No such example of posthumous amnesty can be found in Paris. As long as such an amnesty is impossible the French Republic will be something less than France.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GEOGRAPHY OF OPINION

THE heart of the Republic has always been the region south of the Loire. From that river to the Pyrenees, from the Atlantic coast to the eastern frontier, the country is dominated by Republican sentiment, clear, loyal and uncompromising. It is to-day, in the main, devoted to the advanced parties which are the legitimate descendants of the creators of the régime. Except for Vendée and the lower Loire basin, which properly belong to the West, there are only a few scattered areas in which reactionary opposition is able to lift its head. The Charente, the Lower Pyrenees, the Aveyron and the Maritime Alps send to Parliament a fair number of Clerical or Conservative Deputies. The Gironde occasionally leans towards social Conservatism. But in the region as a whole the Republican ascendancy is scarcely challenged.

There is no universal affinity of race or religion, no common historical origin, to account for this striking political fact. The region is indeed extraordinarily diverse. No close family relationship unites the populations of Touraine, of the Massif Central, of the Rhone valley, of the plain of Tarbes. There is no long historical tradition which drives old Aquitaine and Roman Provence into the same political camp. The underlying principle of union must be sought elsewhere. It is not

running more than the normal risk of generalisation to say that the unifying agent is the institution of peasant proprietorship, which in the minds of all these populations is inseparably associated with the Republic.

Here the Republic is the direct heir of the great Revolution. It was in the South and South-east, and among the wild valleys of the Massif Central, that the early revolts were most widespread and determined. Nowhere were the miseries of the *ancien régime* more desperate, the oppressions more flagrant. Nowhere was the Revolution so complete a deliverance. With the establishment of small ownership in land the slavery of unrequited labour was exchanged for the inestimable freedom of economic security. Feudal injustices were swept away in the triumph of the doctrine that all men were equal before the tax-gatherer. It was above all in the South that the vital association was set up between the egalitarian principle, the governing idea of the Revolution, and the system of peasant proprietorship, which dominates the economic life of France to this day. Of the many examples to be found in history of decisive forces sprung from the marriage of a political idea and an economic interest this is one of the most striking. Beneath all the changes of the nineteenth century it remained the one solid thing. It is the true foundation of the Third Republic. Wherever land is popularly distributed, there the egalitarian principle is strong, and there Republicanism has all along been indestructible. No other single clue is so sure a guide in the labyrinth of French politics. It serves almost everywhere with equal validity. It is the key to the political character even of small communities isolated

in the most reactionary provinces. In his illuminating "Tableau Politique de la France de L'Ouest" M. André Siegfried showed that in a country traditionally anti-Republican the islets of territory in which peasant ownership exists, and the fringes of coast land distributed among fishermen-proprietors, are usually little strongholds of Republicanism.

It is this history which, more than anything else, explains the ascendancy of the Radicals of to-day in the South. They present themselves as Republicans beyond suspicion. On no occasion has the ascendancy been more remarkably demonstrated than at the general election of 1924, which resulted in the formation of the Radical Government of M. Herriot. The electoral decision was not merely decisive, but overwhelming. Of the 320 or 330 Deputies who supported the Herriot Ministry about 200 represented constituencies south of the Loire. The whole region, electing nearly half the Chamber, did not send more than 50 Deputies to join the ranks of the Opposition.

Against the Republican South must be set the *bloc* of resistance of the West. As long as the régime was in question the West presented, in one part or another, every form of political, social or religious organisation which was bound by its nature to be anti-democratic and anti-Republican. Between the Bretons and the rest of the French nation there is even the distinction of race, sufficiently self-conscious to find expression to-day in a rather platonic movement for autonomy. Whatever changes time may bring, it is clear that for several generations still the West will continue to contribute to the body politic of France an element mainly Conserva-

tive, and of a Conservatism largely determined by the peculiar historical structure of the ancient provinces of Normandy, Brittany, Maine, Anjou and Vendée. In Normandy the large landed estates are the surest material guarantee of moderation, though no longer of anti-Republicanism. But in the interior of Maine, Anjou and Vendée there are wide stretches of country in which reaction seems to be enthroned for ever. The social hierarchy is that of the *ancien régime*. Political action is wholly dictated by the old alliance of Noble and Parson. Public institutions are worked by and for the aristocracy. In spite of the form of popular election membership of the local and departmental councils is often virtually hereditary. Over the whole of the West the influence of the Church, though it varies astonishingly both in character and effect, is necessarily cast in favour of Conservatism. Nothing more clearly shows the aloofness of the West from the general progress of Republican institutions than the maintenance of private Catholic elementary schools, often in successful rivalry with those of the State. In the academic province of Rennes, on which the whole region depends, more than one-third of the schools are private. In the province of Toulouse the public schools outnumber the private by nearly six to one.

Taken together, the West of France and the country south of the Loire elect about three-fifths of the Chamber of Deputies. Outside these two regions, one belonging to the Right of politics and the other to the Left, there is only one area, the East, which presents a similarly well-marked partisan character. But the East, while almost homogeneously Conservative, has not the same

attitude towards the régime as the West. Lorraine, which became French less than thirty years before the great Revolution, has scarcely any sentimental link with the Capet dynasty. The attitude of its population is partly determined by racial temperament and by religious influences, but a distinguishing feature of its politics is a frontier Nationalism, often curiously associated with a firm, if moderate, Republicanism. M. Poincaré, whose policy so plainly represents this double tendency, is a typical child of Lorraine. All along the frontier, indeed, even in the industrial North, Conservatism has a tinge of this border Nationalism. The North, however, has progressed more, perhaps, than any other part of France, towards a fusion of the economic and the purely political forces. On the Right there is a strong Church influence, but the parties take their positions still more on the social issue. Divisions are more modern, and the strength of parties varies more markedly with changes of opinion on the immediate questions of the day.

So great a proportion of the electoral strength of France is concentrated in Paris and the large suburban district surrounding it that the region can hardly be ignored in a general survey. Its weight in the councils of the nation is, however, notably inferior to its voting strength. Like most modern capitals, so far from being a microcosm of the nation, a centre in which all political ideas find hospitality in due proportion, it has gradually lost much of its relationship with the profound movement of opinion in the country. It lacks motive power. How impossible it is to gain from Paris any valid impression of feeling in the country may be judged



from the results of the election of 1924, when the most successful party, the Radical-Socialist, had only one representative returned in the Seine department, while the Communists won no fewer than 16 of their 26 seats in the industrial suburbs. The true importance of Paris is not electoral, but resides in its influence, sometimes exercised with great force, on the Parliamentary community which lives and moves and has its being in the capital.

The general political tendencies of these important regions can most conveniently be illustrated by reference to the Legislature of 1924. The election of that year was the only one since the European war in which the division between Right and Left was sufficiently clear for large conclusions to be drawn. In 1919 the country paid an unmeasured compliment to the Clemencist Nationalism which had won the war. The election of 1928 was confused by the monetary crisis and by M. Poincaré's bid for a majority gathered round his person from all parties except the Socialist. In 1924, on the contrary, there was a battle front and a definite victory of the *bloc des gauches* over the *bloc national*. The Herriot Ministry which came into power was a Government of the Left on the old "political" basis and the new "social" basis. In its support were ranged the Republicans of the old school, the anti-clericals, the pacifists who favoured reconciliation with Germany, the advocates of democratic social and fiscal reforms. On the other side were the two Conservatisms, the reactionary and the Republican, incorporating in their still incomplete amalgam the Nationalists, the upholders of the Church and the defenders of property. The division

between the supporters and the opponents of the Herriot Government was not decisive enough to afford an absolute measure of the strength of parties, but it may certainly be used to indicate the remarkable diversity of complexion of the various political regions. The following table shows the ascendancy of the parties of the Left in the South and Centre of France, the solid strength of the Right in the West and East, and the more miscellaneous representation of the North and the Paris area : <sup>1</sup>

## THE POLITICAL REGIONS OF FRANCE

SUPPORTERS AND OPPONENTS OF THE HERRIOT GOVERNMENT OF 1924			
	Supporters.	Opponents.	Communists.
SOUTH OF LOIRE . (54 departments)	199	50	1
WEST . . . (14 departments)	20	74	1
NORTH . . . (4 departments)	31	19	3
EAST . . . (7 departments)	6	41	0
PARIS AREA . . (4 departments)	24	36	19

<sup>1</sup> The region described, with only approximate accuracy, as "South of the Loire," is bounded on the north by the following chain of departments which it includes : Deux-Sèvres, Indre-et-Loire, Loir-et-Cher, Cher, Nièvre, Saône-et-Loire, Jura, Doubs. The departments of the West are : Vendée, Maine-et-Loire, Loire-Inférieure, Sarthe, Mayenne, Ille-et-Vilaine, Morbihan, Finistère, Côtes-du-Nord, Manche, Calvados, Seine-Inférieure, Eure, Orne. The departments of the North are : Pas-de-Calais, Nord, Somme, Aisne. The East includes : Ardennes, Meuse, Moselle, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Vosges, Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin.

The Communists are enumerated separately because, while belonging to the extreme Left, they were in opposition to all Governments. The table indicates the representation of 83 of the 90 departments of France, electing 524 of the 568 Deputies (excluding those from the Colonies) constituting the Chamber of 1924.

Such is the main framework of the politico-geographical structure of France. As a general conformation it is likely to endure, but its component parts are already undergoing serious internal modification. In each of them are reflected, in varying degree, the two chief features of the development of French politics : the consolidation of the régime, and the growing importance of the social question in determining the constitution and policy of parties. These changes, owing to their character, are naturally more visible and significant in the West than elsewhere.

In his minute analysis of the West, one of the most brilliant studies in political literature, M. André Siegfried has exposed the diversity of the elements which constitute a *bloc* in appearance so nearly homogeneous. In vivid contrast with reactionary Vendée is South Finistère, the ancient Cornouaille, which welcomed the Revolution in 1789 and the Third Republic in 1876. The interior of North Finistère, largely dominated by the parish priests, who form a regular theocracy independent of the landowners, is sharply distinguished from Maine-et-Loire, still under the traditional rule of Church and Chateau. Round the whole coast of Brittany there is a band of communes in which the fishermen are Republican and democratic, whatever may be the political sentiments of the hinterland. Over

this region of contrasts the modern movements of politics have swept with notable effect, spreading the area of Republicanism and giving new forms to Conservatism, while leaving, in provinces still extensive, a core of indefeasible reaction.

Writing nearly twenty years ago, M. Siegfried made the remarkable observation that practically the whole of Celtic Brittany, except North Finistère, is at heart anti-clerical and democratic. In a passage which at more than one point suggests a parallel between the Bretons and the Welsh he described the population of the Côtes-du-Nord as "more Catholic than clerical, more religious than Catholic, and right at the bottom always a little pagan and Druidic in its persistent worship of the forces of Nature. . . . They do not love the priests; when they forsake them it is to throw themselves violently into the opposite party. But even then they are religiously Republican, religiously anti-clerical. If they embrace the cause of democracy it is as another form of cult." This is the country of Renan. In its recent behaviour the department of the Côtes-du-Nord has faithfully pursued the evolution which might have been expected from its character. Of its eight Deputies elected in 1928 only one was a declared Conservative, three of the others being Radical-Socialists and the remaining four independent Radicals. Lannion and the first electoral district of Guingamp, which until the war always returned candidates of Royalist tendency, are now represented by Radical-Socialists.

While a great part of this evolution may be attributed to the advance of "political" Republicanism, the department of Finistère furnishes a clear example of the

invasion of the social movement. The arsenal of Bre $\grave{s}$ t long ago introduced Socialism into a community little inclined by nature to accept revolutionary doctrines. In recent years the neighbouring Chateaulin has come under the same influence, and in 1928 elected to the Chamber a Socialist and an independent Radical who received Socialist support. Of the eleven Deputies returned by the department only two were out-and-out Conservatives. What showed most clearly, however, the increasing importance of the social issue was the election of three Deputies belonging to the new Catholic party of the Popular Democrats, a considerable event in a department so largely ruled by the priests. Faithfully Catholic, the Popular Democrats have declared their aim to be that of "doing away with the sophism which associated the idea of the respect of religious convictions with the ideas of political reaction and social Conservatism." As long as the Church question remains unsolved to the satisfaction of all parties this group will, doubtless, often be driven to act in alliance with the Conservatives, but the very fact of its foundation is significant of the transition of politics in the West from the old order towards the new.

In the other political regions there is no movement quite comparable with this progress of the forces of Republicanism and reform in the West. Right and Left vary in strength from one election to another, but not in such a manner as drastically to modify the geography of opinion. It is certain, however, that the ferment of the social movement is working in all provinces and that it menaces the configuration of parties formed on the old "political" basis. If all the

socially Conservative elements became free to act in concert, without the fatal preoccupation with the question of Church and régime, and if Republican Liberalism were compelled to take up its position uncompromisingly on the social issue, a radical redistribution of party forces would assuredly occur. But the time for that transformation is not yet.

### CHAPTER III

## FRANCE AND THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM

PARLIAMENTARISM in France, as elsewhere, has not escaped the pervading scepticism of the day. The Republic "which was so beautiful under the Second Empire" has not retained all its charm. While democracy as a principle is more and more widely accepted, there is, for the moment, a halting faith in its practical utility. In France, certainly, Parliamentary government has neither fulfilled all the hopes of its friends nor disappointed all the expectations of its adversaries. Of its four main functions—the representation of the people, the defence of political liberties, law-making and the formation of stable and authoritative Governments—it has performed the first two tolerably well and the others rather badly. Its record in legislation and in the production of Ministries has indeed at certain times been so inglorious that its apologists have been driven to defend it on the simple ground that it is a guarantee against abuses of power, abuses to which other régimes are singularly more liable.

But that ground of defence is valid. The preservation of civil liberties is a fundamental purpose of political institutions. Nor can it be doubted that in the highest practical aim of government, that of ensuring stability of régime, representative institutions enjoy a peculiar advantage. As freedom of opinion is the very law of

their being they can support, without dangerous shock, internal disturbances which would bring down systems less broadly based. They can afford to work badly. An inefficient dictatorship is doomed. It has no legal or moral excuse. Democratic government, on the contrary, can run the risk of reverses in war or of grave domestic crises with at least an initial advantage over rival régimes. So far as France is concerned there is the authoritative testimony of M. Poincaré that, in spite of certain appearances of fragility, the French Constitution weathered the European war without suffering organic damage. "During and after the war," he wrote in 1929, "there were difficult moments when I heard certain parts of the machinery grating. But in the end no spring was broken and a moving harmony was maintained among all the organs of government." The successful resistance of the régime to a strain which, in 1917, approached breaking-point may well account for the increased public interest in Parliament which has been observable since the war. The number of qualified voters who neglected to go to the polls amounted in 1924 only to 17 per cent., and in 1928 only to 16·3 per cent. At no election before the war was the proportion of abstentions less than 20 per cent., and in 1913 it was nearly 23 per cent.

France coquetted with so many Constitutions during the nineteenth century that historians have doubted the sincerity of her adoption of the Parliamentary system. Great importance has been attached by some writers, both French and foreign, to the fact that the institution of a Parliamentary Republic by the National Assembly in 1875 was the result of a compromise between



Monarchists and Republicans. The Republican régime itself, it is urged, was adopted by a majority of a single vote. The form of Parliamentary government, say some critics, was so arranged that it could in the future be easily fitted into the scheme of a Constitutional Monarchy. Much has been made of a supposed informal treaty or understanding, by virtue of which the Monarchists would have the right to carry out this transformation if another crisis should occur. These considerations, taken together, would lead to the view that Parliamentary government on the British model was chosen, not on its merits, but because it happened to meet the requirements of the parties on two diametrically opposed calculations. It pleased the Republicans by setting up a Republic. It satisfied the Royalists because, in the event of failure, it would facilitate the establishment of a Monarchy.

This view is plausible, but it goes beyond the facts. Its adherents have been misled by the anomalous circumstance that the Republican Constitution was voted by a National Assembly which, at the time of its election, had an overwhelming Monarchist majority. The weakness of the theory becomes apparent as soon as the real character of the Assembly is understood.<sup>1</sup> The National Assembly was elected in 1871 for the specific purpose of negotiating a treaty of peace. That was the one issue. The Republicans, under the fiery leadership of Gambetta, were for a continuance of the war. The Royalists and

<sup>1</sup> The explanation here given, along with much else in the present chapter, mainly follows the argument of Esmein, whose fine treatise, "*Eléments de Droit Constitutionnel Français et Comparé*," is worthy to rank with the most authoritative works on Constitutional Law.

Bonapartists were for a settlement. It was in these conditions that the country gave a majority to the Monarchist parties. In the first instance, therefore, the National Assembly was not directly and explicitly given authority to deal with the question of régime at all. Its right to turn itself into a Constituent Assembly was indeed disputed. But that point rapidly became academic, since all parties ultimately accepted the task of framing a Constitution. The Republican solution was dictated by a remarkable convergence of external circumstances. Bonapartism was in disgrace. The singular ineptitude of certain proceedings of the heir of the Bourbons put him out of court. Meanwhile, the prevailing current of popular opinion showed itself more and more unmistakably to be Republican. Once the Treaty of Frankfort had removed the danger of a renewal of the war the country manifested a very different attitude to the parties on the Constitutional issue, and there was little doubt which side would be victorious if a fresh election were held. In agreeing to set up a Republic the Monarchist parties yielded to the invincible pressure of events.

Nor is the choice of Parliamentary government of the British type explained by any mere bargain of the moment between Monarchists and Republicans. Whatever hopes may have been nursed by individuals the parties as a whole were not seeking a system which could equally well be Republican or Monarchical. The understanding between them seems to have been the quite general one that the Royalists reserved the right of total revision if circumstances should again raise the issue of régime. They stipulated, that is to say, that

they should not be considered as bound, for all time and in every conceivable event, by the compromise to which they had agreed. The actual adoption of Parliamentary government was due to profounder causes. In the first place, the political philosophers of France, from Montesquieu onwards, had always been fascinated by the success of the British system in reconciling authority with liberty. It was to a Constitutional Monarchy that France had instinctively turned after the rigours of the First Empire. The system was then so well understood that certain French writers were counted among its clearest exponents. Chateaubriand illuminated its principles. The maxim, "*Le roi régit mais ne gouverne pas*," which expresses one of its essential doctrines, flashed from the wit of Thiers. Parliamentary government, moreover, had been the subject of more recent studies by some of the intellectuals who remained to pursue political philosophy in the discouraging atmosphere of the Second Empire. Prévost-Paradol had published in his "*La France Nouvelle*" a scheme of government which to-day has the appearance of an inspired forecast of that which was to be accepted a few years later, and there is no doubt that the members of the National Assembly were influenced by it. Almost simultaneously, from the Royalist side, the Duc de Broglie had written his "*Vues sur le Gouvernement de la France*," a pamphlet in favour of Ministerial responsibility, in which the author loyally recognised that his proposals might be embodied in a Republican form of government. Finally, there was a more immediate reason for fixing upon Parliamentary government as the best system to succeed the personal rule of Napoleon III.

For some years before the catastrophe of 1870 the iron rigidity of the Empire had been giving way, and the Liberal movement had been unquestionably directed towards Ministerial responsibility and, ultimately, full Parliamentary government. In any change of régime, however violent, there is a tendency to preserve in the new dispensation some link of continuity with the old. The new Constitution therefore completed, in some sort, a process already begun. It has been noted as curious, having regard to the relation between the French Revolution and the American War of Independence, that the Presidential system never seems to have seriously attracted the successive Constitution-makers of France. It is not, however, surprising that the National Assembly of 1871 neglected to consider it. France was at that moment in peculiar dread of the abuse of power concentrated in the hands of a single person. She had just been delivered from a régime imposed by a President of the Republic who, starting with an inordinate claim to executive authority, had made himself an Emperor.

Owing to the circumstances of its origin the Constitution of 1875 was both provisional and incomplete. There was so little assurance of its vitality that its authors evidently expected changes to be made. A method of revision was prescribed by the Constitution itself. In fact, it has suffered no essential change in its written form. It is, in the troubled history of the governance of France, a striking exemplification of the aphorism that "it is only the provisional that endures." The Constitution-makers confined themselves to the bare necessities. So far were their Constitutional Laws from

making a full and precise scheme of government that they were not even compressed into a single document. The three enactments, containing only 34 clauses in all, did no more than create the executive and legislative organs of government, mainly on the British model, and define the relations between them. They omitted Constitutional guarantees. In sharp contrast with previous French Constitutions they made no mention whatever of the rights of individuals. They did not confirm the *droit administratif*, already in existence. They did not even organise the judicial authority, beyond prescribing an arrangement by which the Senate should act as a High Court for the trial of political cases. Minor alterations have since been made, but the main structure stands in its original state, both in form and substance.<sup>1</sup>

If texts have undergone little change the working Constitution has, however, by no means allowed itself to be confined within the narrow limits of the written clauses. It has evolved by three distinct processes. First, by the interpretation gradually applied to ambiguous texts of the Laws; secondly, by the growth of extra-Constitutional usages; thirdly, by the natural development of certain organs like the Presidency and the Senate, which, being elective, have acquired peculiarities differentiating them from the corresponding British institutions on which they were formally

<sup>1</sup> The text of the Constitutional Laws, with the effect of subsequent amendments, will be found in an Appendix. While this chapter contains a general description of the various organs of government, it seemed better to postpone fuller discussion of them until the actual working of the institutions of Parliament by the parties had been explained. For further consideration of the Presidency, the Senate and the Chamber, the reader is therefore referred to Chapters VII, VIII and IX.

modelled. Owing to its fragmentary character and laconic brevity, in fact, the Constitution of 1875 has escaped the consequences of absolute rigidity. Room has been left for innovations counselled or dictated by experience. In the sum, the unwritten amendments, which have virtually the force of law, have given the French Parliamentary system special characteristics which are of the highest interest.

On the face of it the Constitution is as faithful a copy of the British system as could be designed for a Republican régime. It even tends, as M. Poincaré has remarked, to conform more and more strictly to the essentials of the original. Each of the principal features of one Constitution finds its reflection in the other. There is a popularly elected Chamber, with a Second Chamber of revision. There is a Head of the State who is the nominal executive, but the real executive is a Council of Ministers responsible to the Chambers. The authors of the Constitution of 1875 could not, indeed, create a Head of the State or a Second Chamber on the hereditary principle. What they did was to copy the method of government, to imitate the functions of the various organs rather than the organs themselves. In their general aim they were successful. The machinery of government works, on the whole, in the same way in France as in Great Britain. But there are important differences, some of which arise precisely from the circumstance that the organs are not exact imitations but substitutes. However carefully powers may be defined it is impossible that an elective President of the Republic should have the same relations with Parliament as an hereditary King, or that an elective

Senate should be to the Chamber of Deputies what the House of Lords is to the House of Commons.

In the brief phrases which define the position of the President the intention to make a neat imitation of a Constitutional Monarch is clear. He is irresponsible, except in the case of high treason. As the nominal executive he commands the Army and Navy and makes all appointments in the civil and military services. But this immense authority is cut down by a single merciless sentence: "Each of the acts of the President of the Republic must be counter-signed by a Minister." It would be difficult to define more concisely the real authority of a Constitutional Monarch. The President must act through Ministers, and Ministers are responsible to Parliament. As to the choice of Ministers the Constitution is curiously mute. It is perhaps remarkable that although Cabinet government is the very heart of the Parliamentary system, and was recognised as such in 1875, no direct and unequivocal reference is made to it in the Organic Laws. There is an allusion to the Council of Ministers, which is assumed to be a corporate body, since Ministers are described as collectively responsible. But there is nothing more precise. The title of President of the Council of Ministers is unknown to the Constitution. In short, nearly everything in the organisation of the executive body is left to the working of the rules fixing responsibility and to the traditional practices of Parliamentary government. This lacuna in a written Constitution has not caused insurmountable difficulties. The procedure has long been stereotyped. The personal action of the President is here confined to making the choice of the Prime Minister-designate, in

accordance with the rule that he should be taken from the parties which hold a majority in the Chamber, or that, in default of a majority already existing, he should be a man capable of forming one. It is for the Prime Minister to select his colleagues and assign to them their various offices. In the early years of the Republic more than one President took a hand in the choice of Ministers for particular offices, but such interference has become rare, if not impossible.

One of the most interesting variations which France has brought into the Parliamentary system is the rule that the President of the Republic should regularly preside over the meetings of the full Council of Ministers, which are held at the Elysée, his official residence. This is a practice rather than a rule, for it is not mentioned in the Constitutional Laws. It cannot strictly be regarded as an innovation, for the custom is based on well-founded precedents occurring in the previous experiments in Parliamentary government in France. Louis XVIII., Louis Philippe and the President of the Republic of 1848 all took the chair at meetings of Ministers. The participation of the President in the deliberations of the Cabinet is not, however, an absolute necessity. In fact, Ministers hold two different kinds of meetings. There is the Council of Ministers with the President of the Republic in the chair. There is the less formal Cabinet Council at which the Prime Minister presides. Both are in ordinary use, and the decisions of one are as valid as those of the other. It is usual, however, to reserve for the Council of Ministers large questions of national importance, particularly those concerned with foreign policy and military defence, and major decisions



on such subjects are rarely, if ever, taken without previous discussion at a full Cabinet meeting presided over by the Head of the State.

The effect of this practice is to give the President an appearance of forming an integral part of the Government, though his real position is markedly distinguished from that of Ministers by his total lack of responsibility, and his range of action is severely limited by the Constitutional checks which have been described. The Constitutional Laws give him a further link with the processes of government by the provision that he shall have the right of initiative in legislation "concurrently with the Chambers." In practice this means that the initiative is exercised by Ministers, but in order to indicate the President's association with it his name is put upon the back of all Government Bills. In spite of his apparently active participation in executive business the Council of Ministers has always marked its independence of the Head of the State. A Government in office assumes, by virtue of its responsibility to Parliament, the predominant authority in directing policy. It is the real custodian of power. In pursuit of a policy approved by its Parliamentary majority it can take whatever decisions it pleases. It can, and often does, act in opposition to the declared opinion of the President. The right of the Head of the State to be consulted and to offer advice finds its counterpart in the obligation to accept the decision of the responsible Ministers.

In the making of modern Constitutions the Second Chamber has always been the stumbling-block. Among the organs of government it is the one most difficult to create and the one most vulnerable to criticism when

created. In the Constitution of the Third Republic it is the only one which has suffered material alteration since it was designed. As originally composed it included 75 permanent members appointed by the National Assembly, but an amending Act of 1884 made the whole Senate elective. The main preoccupations of the authors of the Constitution are again plain. They wished to copy the functions of the House of Lords as a check on the democratic tendency of the Lower House. At the same time they wished to protect the Senate in advance against the suspicion which would fall on any assembly owing its power to privilege. They therefore made it mainly elective, but not directly by popular suffrage. The members of the Second Chamber for each department are chosen by a college composed of representatives of the departmental and municipal councils, themselves popularly elected. This attempt to keep Senators as far as possible aloof from the conflicts of party politics is reinforced by the provision that they shall be elected for nine years, and that only one-third of them shall be elected at a time. Finally, it is stipulated that a Senator must be over forty years old, a rule which is interesting as showing at what age, in respectable opinion, a Frenchman acquires a ripe measure of prudence.

It is implicit in the whole conception of the Organic Laws that the Senate should be the less powerful of the two legislative assemblies. Its inferiority is indicated, as in the case of the House of Lords, by the Constitutional rule concerning Finance Bills. While the Senate shares with the Chamber the right to initiate legislation, "the laws of finance must, in the first instance, be

presented to the Chamber of Deputies and voted by that Chamber." This clause, it will be noted, permits the total rejection of the Budget. How far it leaves to the Senate the right of amendment is a matter of constant dispute between the two assemblies. If the view be taken that the Senate's claim is unfounded, its successful establishment in practice would furnish an example of an amendment of the Constitution brought about by imposing an interpretation on an ambiguous text. Another and more serious instance of Constitutional ambiguity is that which raises the question of the responsibility of the Government to the Senate. By a questionable interpretation of a laconic clause the Upper Chamber has on certain rare occasions turned out Ministries. The essential part of the clause provides that "Ministers are collectively responsible before *the Chambers.*" At first sight the use of the plural seems conclusive. It has, however, been argued that the term was employed in a general sense: "before the Chambers" simply meant "before Parliament," it being assumed that the power of Parliament in this matter would be exercised only by the Chamber of Deputies. It is certain that nothing said in the debates of the National Assembly clearly implied an intention to give the Senate a share in this authority, and it is remarkable that, if there were such an intention, it should not have been openly and even warmly discussed. Neither Prévost-Paradol nor the Duc de Broglie, whose writings on the subject obviously inspired the authors of the Constitution, made any such proposal. It would also be singular that, while the British rules were so faithfully followed in other essential respects, this very large

departure from them should have been deliberately made.<sup>1</sup>

In law and in fact the Chamber of Deputies is incomparably the most important organ of government. It presents an obvious parallel to the House of Commons. In spite of textual obscurities its ascendancy over the Senate and the Presidency is beyond question, and in crucial conflicts has been peremptorily asserted. Like the House of Commons, the Chamber of Deputies is the master hand in the making and unmaking of Ministries. It has the first word, and more often than not the last word, in finance. In practice nearly all important Bills are first introduced in the Chamber; fewer measures are initiated in the Senate than in the House of Lords. But the parallel with the House of Commons must not be pressed too closely. The House of Commons gained its authority step by step in the evolution of the institution of Parliament. Behind its very procedure, its visits from Black Rod, its Sergeant-at-Arms and its Mace, loom the impressive souvenirs of a long and scarcely interrupted history. The Chamber of Deputies has no such venerable origin. It is, so to speak, a House of Commons ready-made, a replica of the completed machine. The power of the House of Commons derived from the establishment of the Sovereignty of Parliament, and is still enclosed within that Sovereignty. In France Parliament is not sovereign. It enjoys its powers by delegation from the community as a whole. Its true historical origin is in the Revolution, and the fundamental doctrine on which it stands is that of

<sup>1</sup> The power of the Senate and the possible effects of these claims are further discussed in Chapter VIII.

National Sovereignty. In the everyday working of free institutions the difference between Parliamentary and National Sovereignty may at first sight seem to be little more than academic. It is, on the contrary, of quite capital importance in defining the character of the supremacy of the French Chamber. Neither the Senate nor the Presidency, any more than the Chamber itself, has behind it the tradition of authority ; neither has its inherited share of sovereignty, maintained in principle for centuries, however curbed and re-shaped. As the direct offspring of popular suffrage the Chamber of Deputies has therefore an unrivalled claim to be regarded as the most authentic representative of the sovereign people.

This supremacy of the Lower House has been confirmed by half a century of experience. It has even been dangerously emphasised by what is, in effect, an unwritten amendment of the Constitution. The provision for the dissolution of the Chamber has been employed only once, in 1877. In this matter there is no question of the interpretation of texts. The law is clear. " The President of the Republic may, with the expressed approval of the Senate, dissolve the Chamber of Deputies before the legal expiry of its mandate " ; that is to say, before the end of the four years for which it is elected. The object of the clause is equally plain. The President of the Republic is the nominal Executive. Although elected by the members of the two Parliamentary Chambers he is not their delegate. On his accession to office he immediately becomes a separate organ of government, which it is in the spirit of Parliamentary institutions to keep distinct. In giving him the power of initiative

in compelling a dissolution the authors of the Constitution intended to provide for the case in which, in the view of the Executive, the Chamber of Deputies should cease to represent the opinion of the country, and should therefore, by continuing to exercise authority, arrogate to itself an essentially arbitrary power. The Executive, in short, if convinced that it enjoyed public confidence, could appeal to the country against a hostile Chamber. There are obviously other circumstances in which the procedure might be used, even with the consent of the Chamber itself—for example, in the event of the proved inability of the Chamber to produce a stable majority. It should be said that this device was introduced into the Constitution only after much discussion and with misgiving. Within two years it was used improperly by President MacMahon, who was in conflict with the Chamber of the day. He wished to impose a Ministry which would, in fact, have been unacceptable to the Republican majority. He forced the resignation of the Ministry of Jules Simon, which had not been defeated in Parliament, substituted for it a Government of his own choice and dissolved the Chamber. If the succeeding election had not resulted in a victory for the opponents of the President it would, in all probability, have been followed by a *coup d'état*. In the event the MacMahon precedent has proved disastrous to the whole procedure of dissolution. No Head of the State has since employed it.

Although irresponsible politicians and journalists have in recent years frequently urged dissolution as a convenient escape from a Parliamentary deadlock, the precedent of the Seize Mai has so far proved a fatal bar.

Whatever view may be taken of the practicability of reviving the procedure, there can be no question about the consequences of fifty years of disuse. The whole life of the Chamber, the relations between Ministers and their majority and even the organisation of parties have been founded, consciously or unconsciously, on the assumption that this part of the Constitution is virtually a dead letter, and that every Chamber will live the full four years. A change in that condition would cause, whether for good or ill, a reform approaching a revolution in the methods of French politics.

It would not be proper to conclude a general examination of the French Parliamentary system without reference to the intimate connection between local and national government. Municipal and Parliamentary politics form a whole, in a sense for which no parallel could be found in any part of Great Britain. It is not merely that the Government is directly represented by a Prefect in every department. Apart from such official relations, the members of both the Chamber and the Senate are in great majority recruited from the local councils in the departments which they represent. Nor do they surrender one mandate on receiving another. A Parliamentarian who holds no office in local government is an exception among his fellows. So many departmental councils have a large proportion of Senators and Deputies among their members that meetings of these bodies can only be held during the Parliamentary recess. Even the most distinguished politicians commonly retain the municipal offices which formed their stepping-stones to power. The late President Loubet was Mayor of Montélimar for half his

life. M. Herriot has been Mayor of Lyons for a quarter of a century. M. Poincaré was President of the General Council of the Meuse for at least as long. It is sometimes said that there is a *personnel* of politics throughout the country which almost constitutes an oligarchy. It would be truer to say that the French Parliament has both the qualities and the defects of a system which has carried the principle of representation almost to its logical extreme. Members of Parliament are usually local men. There are exceptions, some of them prominent statesmen, but the proportion of "carpet-baggers" is small. Hence, probably, the old sneer at the "sous-vétérinaires" who were alleged to compose a great part of the membership of the Chamber of Deputies. There is no longer much ground for the accusation that Parliament does not attract to the public service a sufficient number of able men. A system which in one decade gave power to a Clemenceau, a Poincaré and a Briand will bear comparison with its rivals. It may be that the practice of recruiting Parliamentarians from local councils diminishes the opportunity for the entry into public life of suitable men who have no such connections. But it is no small advantage that Parliament should have firm roots in the country. No surer foundation for national institutions could well be conceived.



## CHAPTER IV

### PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

#### I. THE PARTY SYSTEM.

WHEREVER Parliamentary government exists a distinction has to be made between the action of parties in Parliament and their action in the country. In France the distinction is vitally necessary. So marked is the separation of the two functions that the very groups of the Chamber and Senate are far from corresponding exactly with the parties as they present themselves before the electorate. This circumstance affords a special justification for treating the parties in the first instance purely as electoral organisations.

Critics of French institutions commonly start from the assumption that the two-party system is essential to the satisfactory working of Parliamentary government. The soundness of this doctrine has recently been questioned even in Great Britain, where it was for so long axiomatic. Certainly France, with no fewer than seven presentable electoral organisations, would on this principle stand condemned. Some French politicians, impressed by the example of the Mother of Parliaments, would indeed like to see in their own country a concentration of the forces at present dispersed. In 1928 timid attempts were even made, by men on both sides, to promote a consolidation of Right and Left into two definite *blocs*. If the extreme admirers of the old

British system found few to listen to them it was because, for one thing, they had taken too little account of the contrasting mentalities of two different races. British and French parties differ in temperament, in habit of life and manner of growth. Both are indeed always changing, gradually or suddenly, by internal evolution or by disruption. But processes of development which are natural in one system are not natural in the other.

For more than half a century before the European war British parties evolved almost entirely by internal change. The relative tranquillity of a period rarely troubled by grave crises of State was doubtless favourable to the party system, but at least as much credit must be given to the characteristic qualities of the British people. It was above all owing to their dislike of being doctrinaire, of pushing ideas to extremes, that the spirit of compromise for practical government established itself as the presiding genius of politics. Progress occurred with the minimum of agitation. The conformation of parties was in the main so stable as almost to justify the famous generalisation of W. S. Gilbert. But if the moulds of Liberalism and Conservatism remained unbroken, their contents suffered changes amounting in the sum to a revolution. Gladstone, in his long span of life, led a party which travelled over the whole distance from Whiggism to Radicalism. At the beginning he commanded men for whom the Reform Act of 1832 marked the extreme limit of popular government, and at the end was the trusted chief of the Liberal-Labour members who were the precursors of the Parliamentary Labour party. The party which in the 'nineties was thrilled by the disturbing eloquence of

Mr. Lloyd George, was the party which in the 'sixties applauded Sir Robert Lowe's sardonic denunciations of democracy.

It is inconceivable that any French party, in any period of history, should be able to point to a record of such long-continued consistency in form accompanied by such vital changes in aim and composition. The tactical reserves, the half-surrenders, the easy tolerance of differences which are necessary for this smooth and patient evolution are not characteristic of the genius of the nation. The French mind seeks instant and logical expression. Its schools of ideas tend towards neat divisions and reciprocal exclusions. For all its Latin subtlety it distrusts the empiricism which admits compromise for the attainment of practical ends, however desirable. In the turmoil of affairs, indeed, even French logic suffers. The ceaseless and incalculable shifting of practical issues makes havoc of tidily arranged parcels of principle. But the logical tendency remains, with the consequence that French parties are brittle. Every growth of dissentient opinion conveys the imminent menace of a split. The parties are not long-lived and respected institutions maintained by the spirit of give-and-take.

In these comparatively precarious associations it is useless to look for the authority and the dignified tradition which for so long made the British parties almost an integral element of the Constitution. The leaders of French parties come and go with such frequency of change that the man in the street would probably be unable, at any given moment, to name three out of the seven. Not one among those of the last

generation, unless Jaurès be counted an exception, is remembered as a chief enjoying the veneration due to long-continued command. When M. Doumergue was elected President of the Republic few people took the trouble to recall that he had once been President of the Radical party, and certainly that circumstance had nothing to do with his being chosen. Even in the function which the parties perform best—that of providing rallying centres for the various sections of public opinion—they cannot pretend to the highest efficiency. When there are at least five groups which make their appeal to the whole nation it is impossible that each of them should be thoroughly organised on a national scale, maintaining in every corner of the country the costly machinery which the great parties of England and America have brought to such a pitch of elaboration. No single party is, in fact, efficiently active in every constituency, or even in every department. The flaws resulting from this purely mechanical disability are plainly visible. Local committees are often mere skeleton formations, dormant between one election and the next, and sometimes degenerating into café cabals. On occasion they are pettily autonomous, being groups gathered round some “strong local man” and paying little heed to instructions from Paris. When such a man stands for Parliament it is frequently hard to decide whether the candidate has chosen the party or the party the candidate. Not for French parties the iron rule of Whips and Central Offices. Acts of indiscipline, both in Parliament and in the country, are common enough to excite more indignation than surprise when they occur. The more flagrant forms of disloyalty are

indeed punished by the exclusion of the delinquent from the party, but many a career has survived that condemnation, and even prospered under it. A Deputy whose sense of his value to the State leads him to accept office in flat disobedience to his party often makes the agreeable discovery that the sacrifice of cherished convictions brings more gain than loss.

It is within the limits imposed by their modest proportions and by their imperfect cohesion that the present parties live and move and have their being. There are five main electoral organisations. On the Left are the Communist, the Socialist and the Radical-Socialist parties. On the Right is the Republican Democratic Federation, the real Conservative party. Between Right and Left, but inclining decidedly towards social Conservatism, is the Republican Democratic Alliance. To these must be added two considerable minor parties—the Popular Democratic and the Republican-Socialist. The former is composed of Catholics, who stand for what is sometimes called Christian Socialism. The Republican-Socialists, reconstituted after the war, still proclaim themselves to be of the school of Jaurès, but hold aloof from revolutionary Marxist internationalism. Their position is not far removed from that of the Radical-Socialists, with whom they have several times been in electoral alliance. These seven organisations, taken together, receive the great bulk of the votes effectively cast—votes, that is to say, given to candidates who either achieve success or come within measurable distance of it.

At the extreme Right it would be proper to place the Royalist Action Française, but since 1925 that party

has of its own will refrained from electoral activity. A score or so of Breton Conservatives, sitting in the Chamber as independent members, are commonly regarded as potential Royalists. It is hardly necessary to mention smaller groups, such as the National-Socialist (which is considerably more Nationalist than Socialist) or the Socialist-Communist, both insignificant as electoral forces.

Outside all these groupings there still remains a fraction of independent members, numerous enough to play an important part on occasion in a Chamber of nicely balanced forces. There are always independent Radicals, representing scattered constituencies; and those from the North, among whom M. Loucheur has in recent years been a conspicuous representative, have almost enough cohesion to form a small party. It is, moreover, a curious consequence of the French manner of working the Parliamentary system that a certain number of eminent politicians—M. Poincaré, for instance—remain ostentatiously detached from the parties, however decisively their sympathies may go to one side or the other.

The general framework of the present party system was constructed in the early years of the century. This was not the result of accident. The arrangement originated in the last great crisis of the Republic. It dates, that is to say, from the liquidation of the *Affaire Dreyfus* and the period of anti-clerical legislation. The Radical-Socialist party and the Republican Democratic Alliance were founded in their existing form in 1901. The concentration of Conservative forces in the Republican Democratic Federation followed in 1903. By a

coincidence due as much to the international developments of Socialism as to the evolution of purely French politics the Socialist party also was constituted on a fresh basis in 1905. The conformation of parties was thus, at the time of its origin, determined by the existence of a definite set of problems calling for urgent solution. The groups took up their positions in accordance with their several attitudes towards the Nationalist agitation, the Army crisis with its grave judicial complications, the struggle with the Church and the progress of the social movement. In this complex of questions the liquidation of the Affaire Dreyfus and the reform of the relations between Church and State were at the moment matters of incomparably greater importance than the social question. The foundations of the Republic had to be made firm. To accomplish this urgent purpose the obvious instrument was a *bloc des gauches* with the Radical-Socialist party as its centre. The coalition duly came into being. Around the Radical-Socialist nucleus gathered, on one side the Socialists, on the other a less coherent body of Moderates prepared to support drastic measures to consolidate the Republic. It was precisely in order to enlist these Moderates more effectively that Waldeck-Rousseau, himself a man of the Centre-Left, founded the Republican Democratic Alliance for the elections of 1902. Opposed to this *bloc* the Republican Democratic Federation represented Nationalism and Catholic defence. During this period the parties were, on the whole, better organised than they have ever been, before or since. As long as the compelling necessity of the crisis endured the *bloc des gauches* held together. Until the passing of the Separation Act, and indeed until

1909, France had a steady party system. In a sense, however, it was an *ad hoc* arrangement, and its specific purpose of protecting the Republic has long ago been achieved. The parties are to-day no longer in the same positions.

The two poles of domestic politics are still the religious question and the question of social reorganisation. But since the beginning of the century the order of their relative importance has been reversed. The orientation of politics towards the social issue is unquestionable. The party system which was formed mainly on the old "political" basis is therefore struggling to place itself mainly on the new "social" basis. It has not entirely succeeded. If the religious question is raised in an acute form it alters for the moment the whole battle front of politics. When other problems hold the stage it still lurks in the background. At all times it is dangerous to touch. Two statesmen of authority—M. Poincaré and M. Herriot, one acting in favour of the Church and the other against—have both had recent experience of the peril. M. Herriot, although fresh from a victory at the polls, found it impossible in 1924 to withdraw the Embassy from the Vatican. Five years later, M. Poincaré's attempt to give legal sanction to the return of certain exiled Catholic associations to France provoked the resignation of the four Radical members of his Cabinet, and had to be promptly abandoned. These examples are sufficient to show that, while the principal parties are breaking through the confines of the historic political system, they have not entirely made their escape. An intrusion of the old issue tends to throw them back into the classical positions. Thirty



years ago it might have been said that the party conformation was warped by the social question; it might be said with equal truth to-day that it is warped by the religious question.

An examination of the real Conservatism of to-day—the avowed and the unavowed—reveals the warp, while it shows conclusively the social trend of politics. There is, first, the out-and-out Conservatism of the Republican Democratic Federation, which is equally devoted to the interest of the Church and to the defence of the social order. Nationalist in foreign affairs, distrustful of popular ideology and in great part hostile to the spirit of Republicanism, it takes the side of the large industrial and commercial interests, but is above all an organ of the venerable Conservatism of the French upper middle class, *bien pensant*, of modest but carefully guarded fortune, the most bourgeois class in Europe. Nothing more clearly exhibits the character of the party than its insistence on the value of the family as a social unit. Here it is typically French and not less typically Catholic. It offers the most determined resistance to death duties, not merely as a tyrannous exaction, but because they diminish the family patrimony. It is shocked by the “godlessness” of the public schools, and in this matter also it asserts the exclusive and inalienable right of parents to direct the education of their children in accordance with their religious beliefs. It represents the Conservatism of the past.

Side by side with this Conservatism, but shrinking from too close a contact, is the social Conservatism of the Democratic Alliance. This remarkable organisation may be said to exemplify, within its own borders, all

the hesitations and ambiguities which distract French politics. It is ostensibly a Centre party, still composed of Republican Moderates as it was when it was formed in 1901. But its history during the last thirty years strikingly illustrates the new orientation of politics. Founded to organise support for the anti-clerical legislation of Waldeck-Rousseau, it worked at the beginning in concert with the famous *bloc des gauches*. It was a party of the Centre-Left. But with the fading of the religious issue and the increasing importance of social problems its attitude changed. Its social Conservatism took the upper hand. Originally it inclined to the Left because the dominant question was that of the Church and, indirectly, of the régime. Now it leans to the Right because the dominant issue is social. It continues to declare itself in favour of the *lous laïques*, but its essential characteristic is its uncompromising antagonism to Socialism. So profound has been its evolution that it was the chief promoter of the *bloc national* of 1919. In foreign affairs, while not violently Nationalist, it has shown itself rather lukewarm towards a *rapprochement* with Germany, and even towards the Locarno agreement. But the essential character of the party is most apparent in its social, economic and fiscal policy. It may be described as a character of enlightened Conservatism. The Democratic Alliance is, in fact, the most direct representative of the powerful organisations of trade and industry. Its programme, while not illiberal, is such as might have been written at their dictation. It is against State interference in economic matters and would have no more monopolies. It is not opposed in principle to the eight-hour day, but pleads for exceptions

from its rigours. It prefers indirect to direct taxation. One of its main purposes in legislation would be to stimulate production, and some of the liberal measures which it approves, such as a housing policy, are really conceived as furthering this aim. It is probably doing little injustice to the party to say that its ideal Government would be one which disengaged itself from sterile quarrels about general principles and devoted its efforts to organising the material prosperity of France on the existing basis of society. The conception is respectable, but it offers in its realism a cold alternative to Catholic sentiment on the one hand and the lofty aspirations of Socialism on the other. It lacks that *petite flamme d'idéal* which Clemenceau, for all his cynicism, considered an essential of statesmanship.<sup>1</sup>

But the most singular characteristic of the Democratic Alliance remains to be described. In spite of the importance of its rôle, the representative quality of its doctrine and the intelligence of its leadership, it is not in the strict sense a party at all. The Democratic Alliance is an electoral organisation, but not a party in Parliament. It is vain to seek either in Chamber or Senate a group which bears its name or which is exclusively composed of its adherents. In 1928 no fewer than 110 Deputies were elected under its auspices, but in the Chamber they distributed themselves among five distinct groups of very diverse tendencies. About half of them found their way into the group of the *Répub-*

<sup>1</sup> M. Tardieu's Ministry of 1930 very faithfully represented the ideas of the Democratic Alliance. Its National Equipment Scheme, the most important piece of legislation which it proposed, was entirely consonant with the utilitarian policy of the party.

*licains de Gauche*, but even that group, which might seem to be representative, contained a dozen outsiders. Electorally, the Democratic Alliance has the regular attributes of a powerful party. It has its executive committee, its annual congress, its declarations of policy, its approved candidatures. There it stops short. The elected Deputies are not brigaded or controlled by Whips, and the only real check placed on their freedom of action is the possibility that their candidatures may not be endorsed when next they appear before the electorate. It may be doubted whether the political system of any other country can show a similar example of a strong electoral organisation which has no corresponding party in Parliament. The existence of the phenomenon in France illuminates the ambiguities of a period of transition from the old order to the new. The Conservatism of the Democratic Alliance is the Conservatism of the future. Its function for the time being is to ensure the presence in the Chamber of Deputies of moderating tendencies, whether they incline to work with the Radicals on the Left or the Conservatives on the Right, or prefer to remain as independents. If it were to attempt more, if it were to become a party in the complete sense of the term, as some of its leaders wish, it would gain as a Parliamentary force, but it would lose half its electoral strength.

On the Left of politics, as on the Right, the party system bears the unmistakable marks of a process of transition which, in the opinion of many competent observers, may in the end necessitate a drastic regrouping of forces. There is a crisis of Radicalism which, while it resembles in some respects the crisis

through which Liberalism is passing in some other countries, has features of its own. The Radical-Socialist party, for so long the backbone of Republican defence, is adapting itself to the new orientation of politics and is suffering under the strain of its effort. Its main appeal has traditionally been addressed to the peasant proprietors, the *petits bourgeois* of the countryside, and, in the towns, to that mass of the population which occupies the confines between the working class and the wealthy Conservative interests. In a party so constituted it was natural that there should be two tendencies on the social question, one more advanced than the other. After the virtual break-up of the old *bloc des gauches* which followed the passing of the Separation Act, it was permissible to doubt which tendency was the stronger. The party endangered its hold over a large section of its urban supporters. It became a "party of government" in the peculiar sense in which that expression was then used in French politics: that is to say, it became a party accustomed to share in varied and dubious combinations with the Moderates. There was even a tentative return to Whiggism, marked in 1906 by the formation of a Ministry under Clemenceau, the last vehement representative of *laissez-faire* Liberalism. On the social question Clemenceau, like Mr. Roebuck Ramsden, had not an idea in his head later than 1860. A strong reaction followed this belated experiment in uncompromising individualism. There still remains a Whiggish element, but at the cross-roads of its recent history the party has usually taken the Leftward turning. "No enemies on the Left," the classical watchword of Camille Pelletan, is still its rule, modified by a refusal to consider Com-

munism as within the pale of ordered politics. The movement of opinion in a great part of its electoral clientèle compels it to keep on terms with the Socialists. Whatever relations it may cultivate with neighbouring groups among the Moderates in Parliament, and with whatever reluctance its Whiggish members may follow the majority, it remains electorally a party of the Left.

In recent years it has been part of the tactics of the Socialists to pretend that they are the predestined heirs of a Radicalism whose days are already numbered. It is conceded that the Radical-Socialist party will for a time continue to perform the useful service of rallying certain sections of the electorate to the Left. But the more moderate of its members will sooner or later, it is assumed, drift away to the centre of politics, while the more advanced will be unable to resist the enveloping movement of Socialism. This calculation, which obviously assimilates the vicissitudes of French Radicalism to the general decline of European Liberalism, is subject to certain correctives. In 1930 the Radical-Socialists still constituted the strongest party in the State. After the general election of 1928 their group in the Chamber numbered 121 Deputies, and that of the Socialists 100. It is perhaps even more important to note that Socialist representation was at that election very unequally distributed over the country. While Radical candidates were successful in more than two-thirds of the 90 departments, there were 41 departments which returned no Socialist Deputies at all. The disparity could be attributed to various causes, but undoubtedly the main one was the maintenance of the Radical hold over the peasant proprietors. For a vast

proportion of this most important class of the electorate, slow to move towards new issues, the Radical-Socialist party represents the Republic.

It is certain, however, that the Radical-Socialist party is more at its ease and more united on the old issues than on the new. It is equally certain that its long-continued ascendancy over some sections of the urban electorate is threatened from both sides. Nor is it difficult to discern at least one of the causes of this fluidity of the electorate. The small tradesmen and independent artisans who constitute the *petite bourgeoisie* find their position menaced on the one hand by the modern concentration of capital and on the other by the spread of co-operative enterprise. This class, particularly numerous in France—on the basis of the census of 1906 it was estimated to include four and three-quarter million persons—has always been predominantly Radical. Its reaction to modern economic tendencies is as yet indecisive. Some of its organisations show signs of moving towards a mild Conservatism. But there is also evidence that, in face of the gigantic concentration of commercial and industrial enterprise, a large section of the lower middle class is discovering a growing community of interest with the working class. Recent elections have given indisputable proof of the transferability of a part of the Radical-Socialist vote to the Socialists. The electoral area over which the two parties are in direct competition is widening. More and more they are rivals for the favours of the same clientèle.

As was to be expected, the enlarged electoral opportunity offered to the Socialists has accentuated the

tendency already existing in the party to insist less on doctrine and to concentrate effort rather on the conquest of Parliamentary power. M. Léon Blum, their leader, has publicly declared their readiness to form a Socialist Government when occasion serves. It would be a Ministry strictly within the framework of the Constitution. Like any bourgeois administration it would introduce a Budget necessarily containing many non-Socialist provisions. It would propose the military expenditure which, in Opposition, the party has always refused to vote. Nor should this pronouncement be treated lightly, as if it related to an improbable contingency. It is notorious that one of the crises of 1930 almost resulted in M. Paul-Boncour being called upon to constitute a Ministry; and if the invitation had been given, the leader of the Socialist "participationists" would have accepted it with the full consent of his colleagues. In default of that solution the Parliamentary group actually declared in favour of participation in a Radical-Socialist Government, though the party congress refused its consent to that combination. This new attitude towards the responsibilities of government is highly significant. Among the important sections of the Second International the French is the last to abandon the old principle of isolation. It is conceivable that the opportunity of taking office may not present itself in the near future, or that tactical considerations may make a further period of Opposition seem advisable. Even if that should happen, the general "Constitutional" trend of Socialist policy cannot now be reversed.

In conformity with its change of principle the Socialist party has revised its electoral strategy. It is following



the example of the British Labour party, by which it has undoubtedly been deeply impressed. It has not, indeed, copied the constitution of the Labour party ; it is Socialist but not "travailliste." It is organically independent of the trade union movement. The Confédération Générale du Travail plays no part in its management and has no authority in determining policy comparable with that exercised by the Trade Union Congress in England. This "separation of powers" was deliberately decided upon in 1921, on the occasion of the Communist scission. It was then laid down as a principle, involving a refusal to join the Third (Bolshevik) International, that the trade union movement should be autonomous and should not be subordinated to a political party. Whatever advantage the trade unions may have drawn from the application of this principle there can be no doubt that it has saved the Socialist party from certain embarrassments. The British strike of 1926 and the failure of the Labour Government to deal effectively with the financial crisis of 1931 showed the danger of too intimate an association between an industrial and a political movement. In electoral strategy, however, the British precedent has been closely followed by the French Socialists. M. Léon Blum cries, with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, that the Socialist party is "a party of evolution" and, with Mr. Maxton, that it is "a party of revolutionary transformation." For the purpose of capturing the Radical clientèle he puts on the outer garments of the Radical. The capital levy, which was pressed on reluctant Radical Governments as a symbolical indication of Socialist influence, is discreetly withdrawn from view. Measures

of wide appeal occupy the forefront of the programme in preference to proposals which startle the bourgeois.<sup>1</sup> While the Socialist party remains necessarily attached to the principle of the neutrality of the State in religious matters, M. Blum makes a subtle little overture to the Catholics, who have always been less hostile to the Socialists than to the more anti-clerical Radicals. Finally, and most significantly, the party has made a fresh effort to remove the fear of spoliation from the minds of the five million peasant proprietors of France, the most powerfully entrenched owners of private property in the world. Socialism, declared a resolution passed at the party congress held at Bordeaux in 1930, "will consider it an imperative duty to leave in possession of their property the small owners who cultivate their own land or who, if they employ complementary or accessory labour, sometimes casually, furnish with the help of their family the greater part of the labour needed to develop their land." This impressive departure from the doctrine of national ownership is not an absolute novelty. Texts from the prophet Jaurès himself may be quoted in its favour. But its proclamation in 1930 marks, more surely than anything else, the large purpose of the new opportunism.

Whether from the employment of such tactics or from the natural advantages which it enjoys as the spear-head of the social movement, the Socialist party has made great progress. The next election may show it to be the strongest party in the country. But it is evident

<sup>1</sup> M. Herriot, the Radical leader, said that the new Socialist programme reminded him of a restaurant he had once seen, which bore the sign . *Restaurant Ouvrier. Cuisine Bourgeoise.*

that its abandonment of its old position as a party permanently non-governmental will leave a vacancy which the Communists will try to fill. Communism in France has not yet convincingly presented the appearance of a cause whose progress is genuinely due to its doctrine. Its successes are too spasmodic to be solely the result of the gradual growth of opinion. The numbers of its adherents, both industrial and political, are subject to wide and sudden fluctuations, at certain periods almost from one month to the next. In a few districts it has apparently gained a firm footing. It has several times demonstrated its electoral strength in the industrial suburbs of Paris and in the textile districts of the North. Other examples of success are to be found in scattered constituencies. At the last two general elections the Communists in the Cher department, which includes Bourges, received more votes than any other single party, though coalitions for the second ballot in 1928 prevented them from winning any of the four seats. These facts are evidence of some local solidity of foundations. No general indications of firm establishment can be found in the election returns for the country as a whole. It is true that at the election of 1928 the Communists received altogether more than a million votes, one-tenth of the total poll, and nearly the same proportion of the aggregate vote in 1924. The figure is high; it compares, for instance, with a Socialist poll of 1,700,000 in 1928. But its apparent impressiveness dwindles considerably on a closer examination. In the first place, the Communists had no fewer than 589 candidates in the field for the 612 seats. The great majority of these were doomed to defeat

before the fight began. In 42 departments the 231 Communist candidates polled on the average fewer than 600 votes each, a totally inadequate number to give them a chance of winning. Polls of two or three hundred votes were numerous. These candidatures, individually negligible, accounted for 130,000 votes in the Communist poll. Any other party could have increased its total of votes throughout the country by employing the same tactics of putting up candidates everywhere. There is, however, a more important reason for discounting the value of the election returns as a true measure of the strength of the Communists. On the second ballot the poll of their candidates, who were by order kept in the field almost everywhere, was very seriously diminished and in many cases almost disappeared. This is fairly clear proof that the votes received at the first ballot were not obtained by Communism, *qua* Communism.

To put the case shortly, the Communist vote is not in any high degree a vote of adherents of a party; it is a vote of the discontented. Its chief interest at present lies in its possible effects on the fortunes of Socialism. At any given moment the electoral chances of Communism depend on the success or failure of the Socialist party in maintaining its reputation as an extremist party. Whenever *L'Humanité* can point to the Socialists as close allies of bourgeois Radicals, or as observing a benevolent neutrality towards a Government still more suspect, Communist stock rises in the electoral market. In periods of active opposition, on the other hand, the Socialists regain the lost ground. Each of the rival parties in turn captures and loses a portion of that

wavering class of electors which cares little for schools or dogma, but which is "agin' the Government." Clearly, it is a delicate task for the Socialists, turning more and more towards the exercise of power, to carry with them this floating vote, normally not important, but capable of portentous expansion in times of economic depression. At every step they risk something of their reputation as a party of revolt, and the Communists are at hand to claim the succession. Twenty-five years ago a handful of Socialist leaders were thrown into gaol on the eve of the annual labour demonstrations on May Day; now it is the Communist leaders who are arrested. No Minister of the Interior ever dreams of charging a Socialist with subversive political agitation. These considerations indicate the place of the Communists in French politics. Their chief importance is as a party of the discontented, varying in strength with every change in the economic health of the nation, never a strongly organised electoral force, but never wholly negligible.

Although the *Action Française* is by its own will excluded from the party system, and even from the body corporate of the Republic, it occupies an interesting position and cannot properly be ignored. That position is often misunderstood. The *Action Française* is popularly regarded simply as an association of the pious partisans of the *ancien régime*. It is much more than that. It is Royalist, not in the first instance by sentiment but by the application of a very definite and complete theory of politics. In point of fact, the *Comité d'Action Française*, at the time of its foundation in 1898, conceived its effort as being exerted within the Republic and dis-

sociated itself from the old form of régime, "for nothing can be done with the dead." Its leaders then were for the most part free-thinkers—as some of them still are. If it afterwards rallied to the House of Orleans that was because it had come to the conclusion that a Monarchy was necessary for the practical realisation of its theory. It came to its position by a new road which the Catholic Royalists of tradition had no need to take. The central idea of the *Action Française* is its ultra-Nationalism, its *nationalisme intégral*, which sprang originally from the anti-semitism of the *Affaire Dreyfus* but has since been elaborated into a remarkable body of doctrine. Few conceptions of the State since that of Machiavelli have been so ruthlessly based on national self-interest. In external affairs nothing but the national interest must count. In the matter of the Republic the same commanding "realism" leaves no room for scruples; the Republic must be overturned by any means available. The right of a Government to rule the country has nothing to do with the manner in which it reaches power; "it is only the result, the interest of the nation, which can give it that right and make it legitimate." The principles of government which this stern and Jesuitical utilitarianism seeks to establish take the form of a benevolent absolutism, combined with a measure of regional autonomy in administration. The King will be Master. There will be no "English" Parliament and no central representative government, since it is manifestly impossible for a democracy to seize the problems of government which present themselves, still less to give an informed decision upon them. The King will have his Ministers responsible solely to

himself. Every year delegations from the provincial assemblies will meet in Paris to vote supplies. Chambers of commerce and other economic organisations will act as technical advisers. In the country the natural economic regions surrounding the great centres like Lille and Lyons and Bordeaux will become large units, autonomous in matters which do not affect the national interest.

It will be seen from this brief exposition that the *Action Française* is far from being a mere party of reactionary revolt against the Republic. Its anti-Republicanism, preached with energy and ability by a group of intellectuals, has, however, attracted to it many traditional Royalists. It has its propagandist centres, its bands of adherents throughout the country, generally active and sincere, though not numerous, partisans of a lost cause. The disorderly exploits of young men, which are usually rather ridiculous demonstrations of the resolve to stop at nothing in the attempt to upset the Republic, should not be allowed to obscure a genuine idealism. It is a question whether the movement is gaining or losing strength. The action of the Pope in placing the *Action Française*, the newspaper, on the "Index" has doubtless damped the ardour of some of its members, but the bulk of them regard the ban of the Vatican less as an act of the religious authority than as an opportunist political move.

## II. THE ELECTORATE.

Half the weaknesses of a too complex party system are corrected by the admirable behaviour of the electorate. If it were not for the native shrewdness of the people,

the unsentimental appreciation of men and motives, the fidelity to principles once accepted, the sense of measure and, not least, the thrifty watchfulness over purse-strings, the verdict delivered in the presence of so many rival causes might well be unintelligible. Even these saving graces would be ineffectual if there were not a general interest in politics. Of the reality of that interest there is fortunately no question. Some observers in the past have noted what they took to be signs of indifference,<sup>1</sup> but no such criticism could be justified to-day. It would doubtless be easy to find, by frequenting Parisian drawing-rooms, persons of respectability who are shocked by the inevitable disorder of Parliamentary government and would prefer to see affairs quietly managed by a board of directors. In such circles there is often a detachment, real or affected, from the dusty struggles of politics. But this aloofness is anything but representative. Among the people generally there is, on the contrary, a lively concern. Every important move, every significant incident, provokes discussion wherever two or three are gathered together, especially in the provinces. There is more talk of politics in a French café than in an English public-house. The prominence given to political news in the French popular Press, in spite of an unrivalled picturesqueness of crime, is a matter for unceasing astonishment among British and American journalists.

General elections provide the capital test of popular interest, and here the evidence is overwhelming. In no country is an election more truly a consultation of the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bodley, for example, wrote of the "indifference in matters political, widespread among all classes in France."



people. The contests which are least visibly marked by agitation are not the least impressive. In 1924 there was so little effervescence that party agents suspected apathy, but 83 per cent. of the voters went to the polls. At the election of 1928 the proportion was even slightly higher. But the most conclusive piece of evidence is to be found in the readiness of electors to take part in the second ballot. In 1928 second ballots were necessary in two-thirds of the constituencies, yet the number of votes cast at the first was not very considerably diminished at the second. In the Aisne department, where 88 per cent. of the electors voted, the first ballot was inconclusive in six of the seven constituencies, and of the 100,000 voters concerned all but 800 paid their second visit to the polls. If electors were not keenly interested in politics it would be impossible for the most energetic parties to persuade so many persons to vote twice. The phenomenon is the more remarkable as house-to-house canvassing is not practised in France.

In presence of an interest so general and so spontaneous, corruption, of whatever kind, could not conceivably exert an influence of the first order. That noxious weed of politics can really flourish only in small and confined communities and in an atmosphere of lazy or cynical indifference. It would be too much to say that electors everywhere are models of civic virtue. There are constituencies in which it is possible for a rich man so to use his wealth as to turn a delicate balance in his favour. A Deputy elected in a flunkeyish constituency of the Riviera was commonly believed to have triumphed by a "money campaign." Nor is "coal and blanket" bribery altogether unknown. In one of the smallest

rural *arrondissements* a candidate of vague opinions but of great wealth was alleged to have won his seat some years ago by a patriarchal munificence which did not disdain to equip a village fire brigade with new uniforms. Direct payment for votes must now be extremely uncommon. At one time there were regions peculiarly liable to this abuse. Poor Celtic populations in the West notoriously reconciled their religious idealism with a susceptibility to material arguments. A more serious abuse, which still survives, is the economic pressure put by landlords on tenant farmers in the patriarchal regions where the old feudalism, or even simply large land-owning, continues to exist.

Much is often made of the electoral influence of Prefects of departments. French politicians themselves sometimes display a touching faith in it. Nearly every change of Government is followed by a *valse des préfets*. A Government of the Left will remove a Prefect who is under suspicion of favouring the reactionary elements in a department of doubtful tendency. Twelve months later a Ministry of Conservative inclinations will counter by making similar strategic dispositions to its own advantage. Certainly, the power of the Prefect is not negligible. He is the officer of the Government. For his appointment he owes little or nothing to the community whose affairs he administers. A departmental or municipal council finds it an advantage to be agreeable to a man who, by his function, can be of great use in obtaining the consent of the authorities in Paris to some local scheme of electrical equipment or railway building. As a dispenser of favours to persons he is scarcely less

powerful ; he can place many under obligations to him, and through him to the Government which employs him, by friendly help in obtaining appointments in the public services. In much the same way as the Prefect the Deputy himself is an instrument, willing or unwilling, of this form of petty corruption. Generally a local man, he is pestered both before and after his election by scores of persons who hint, with more or less discretion, that some service rendered will assure him, as nothing else will, of their political support. It would be easy, however, to exaggerate the importance of this electoral blackmail. In a community where every kind of affair is seen in terms of persons rather than of things, where the simplest business orders are obtained as often as not through personal relationships, it is useless to look for a puritanically objective attitude towards the claims of Parliamentary candidates. The exploitation of personal connections is *dans les mœurs*. But such practices are merely the by-products of electioneering. For every elector who attempts to extort favours from a candidate it would be possible to find fifty or a hundred who would not, for any consideration, vote against their convictions.

It is obvious indeed that over the whole area of an electorate numbering ten millions these local abuses must, in the sum, cancel one another out. Moneyed interests here and political jerrymandering there may produce their secondary effects, but they are drowned in the real political conflict. With some errors of detail the results of a general election reflect the strength and tendency of the political forces in the field.

The very multiplicity of those forces, however, stamps

French elections with a character of their own. The voters elect a Chamber of Deputies. They do not in the normal course send a party and a Government into power. They do not perform, that is to say, one of the most conspicuous functions of the British electorate. In France no party can hope to possess an absolute majority over all others. The strongest party in 1928 obtained less than one-fifth of the total number of votes cast at the first ballot. Normally, therefore, a French election does not present the aspect of a stern and direct contest between a party of Government seeking to retain its majority and a party of Opposition making a straight bid for power. There is always, of course, a Government in office at the time of a general election. It is indeed regarded as an advantage for a party to be represented in a Ministry which "makes the elections." But it is only on rare and critical occasions that a general election even approaches resemblance to an appeal to the country, the classical procedure of British politics. Waldeck-Rousseau may be represented, though not without exaggeration, as the head of a Ministry which in 1902 submitted a definite record to the electorate and obtained a renewal of confidence. Only ill-health necessitated the Prime Minister's resignation in the new Legislature. At first sight the Poincaré Government which was in office in 1928 may seem to have appealed to the country on its achievement in having saved and stabilised the franc. But the conditions in which the latter election was fought showed how fallacious was this appearance. All parties except the Socialists and Communists were represented in the Ministry before, during and after the election. So far,

however, from going to the country as a Governmental combination with an agreed programme the constituent groups were in declared rivalry with each other, their self-interest being nowhere more clearly betrayed than in the attempt which they severally made to turn the personal prestige of the Prime Minister to their own exclusive profit. The *Cartel des Gauches* which was victorious in 1924 could claim to be a clear combination, and the election of that year had the rare effect of indicating the type of Government which should result from it. But even on that occasion the Radicals and Socialists had only formed a war alliance; they had no common, préarranged programme of legislation and the Socialists did not contribute any members to the Ministry which was set up.

In the ordinary case a French election is not a "straight fight" between two opposing forces. Another factor, moreover, accentuates its character of inconclusiveness. Owing to the disuse of the procedure of dissolution it takes place at a date fixed in advance; in default of accidents or of a change in the present law an election is due to occur in the spring of every leap year until doomsday. An election is never occasioned by a Ministerial crisis. It is never provoked by a decision of Parliament to refer to the country some particular issue which it has itself failed to solve. It has no character of emergency. As a natural consequence of these conditions the programmes of parties have not the fundamental importance which they assume in a British election. One rarely hears at election meetings detailed expositions of Bills past and Bills to come, of projected administrative changes, of financial proposals launched

with the authority and responsibility of men who may within a few weeks be called upon to make good their promises. All the parties indeed have their programmes, but the utmost which any party can hope for is that it may be able to induce some Government to father one or other of its measures, modified, perhaps, to meet the exigencies of other groups. The importance of such programmes is not immediate and compelling. The attention of the elector is thus directed less to practical measures than to principle and tendency. He is, it is true, stern and precise in his judgment of men and parties whom he can hold responsible for increases in taxation or for disastrous manipulation of the wheat duty. But even in regard to past mistakes written plainly on the record of Parliament the responsibility of a particular party is not often total; it is usually shared with other parties. As for the future, the elector certainly gives weight to the advantages which he, or his class, or the country as a whole may reap from measures advocated by this party or that, but the main considerations which influence him are those concerning principles and persons.

If party nomenclatures and the windy commonplaces of candidates' addresses were his sole guides the task of the elector would appear to be one of bewildering complexity. Fortunately, the reality is clearer than the appearance. In the main, the elector knows quite well what he wants and whom he wants. Perhaps, as dissatisfaction is more easily achieved than satisfaction, he knows still better what and whom he does not want. He subjects politics to certain necessary simplifications. It must not be supposed that he knows all the groups

in the Chamber, down to the most microscopic, or that he notes every petty intrigue in the four years' game of Parliamentary politics which is played in distant Paris. But he is aware of the principal events, and watches, in particular, the performances of the local member and his party. Votes on critical occasions, for or against a particular Ministry, for or against the Church on the education question, for or against certain forms of taxation, are duly noted. Each of these acts is doubtless judged on its individual merits, but taken together they have a more general importance as showing the tendency of a man or a party towards Right or Left. It may safely be said that a candidate at an election, whether sitting member or not, is classed in the first instance according to his position on certain fundamental issues as a man of the Left or a man of the Right. That is the primary simplification.

A further simplification arises from the restriction which circumstances impose on the number of candidatures. It is a sheer impossibility for all the parties to put up candidates everywhere. There is probably not a single constituency in which the full range of seven electoral organisations is ever represented. The election of 1928 was not typical—there was, in fact, an unusually large number of candidates in the field—but it showed sufficiently well how this particular simplification is brought about. There were, on the average, more than six candidates for every seat, but at least two of the six, again on the average, were quite negligible and were practically ignored by the electorate. Normally, the number of serious candidatures was three or four. Although no general agreements were made between

the parties in regard to candidatures for the first ballot, certain considerations in practice favoured this restriction. In the first place, parties unable to present candidates everywhere made a choice of constituencies in which they had the best chance of success. There were far fewer Socialist candidates in rural districts than in the towns. The Popular Democratic party made its appeal to constituencies in which the labouring population is devoutly Catholic. Secondly, in spite of the absence of binding alliances, there were many places in which one party voluntarily stood aside to leave the field open for another. Where interests were not too divergent the Democratic Alliance and the Republican Federation would often avoid conflict with each other even on the first ballot, while similar acts of abnegation were observable among the Radical-Socialists, the Socialists and the Republican-Socialists on the other side of politics. Finally, every party could show a list of constituencies in which it neither put forward a candidate nor gave any lead, tacitly or otherwise, to its local adherents.

In the result, the three, four or five serious candidates among whom the elector makes his choice form an array much less bewildering than the dazzling spectrum of groups in the Chamber of Deputies. Locally, the voter has before him a number of representative men whose colours, with rare exceptions, he recognises without question. Of the four candidates one would almost necessarily be a Communist (since that party was represented nearly everywhere). The other three would represent an assortment varying greatly according to the electoral complexion of different regions. In those parts of the South in which the Conservative or reactionary



vote is small the parties of the Left can take the risk of competition among themselves. The list of parties presenting candidates might in such cases be constituted as follows :

Republican Federation or Democratic Alliance.  
Radical-Socialist.  
Socialist.  
Communist.

In this type of constituency the candidate of the Democratic Alliance usually styles himself "Républicain de Gauche," but he often appeals to the same class of voters as the candidate of the Republican Federation. In a fair number of constituencies there may be a Republican-Socialist or an Independent Socialist, either as a fifth candidate or in substitution for the Radical-Socialist or Socialist.

Where the Conservative or Moderate vote is strong there is often, on the other hand, a conflict between two candidates of the Right, or between Right and Centre, while the parties of the Left concentrate. In such cases the list of parties represented may thus become :

Republican Federation.  
Democratic Alliance.  
Radical-Socialist or Socialist.  
Communist.

With his three, four or even five candidatures before him the elector has a more manageable problem than that with which the party system would at first sight seem to threaten him. In the case of the great majority

of candidatures Right and Left are immediately recognisable. The most considerable complexity arises from the varying composition and tendency of the Centre. So long as there are elements of opinion at once non-clerical and socially Conservative there must be candidates whom it is impossible to classify absolutely. For the local elector, however, this difficulty of classification is not as formidable as it appears. In the majority of constituencies the so-called Moderate in effect takes sides. Here, he is more concerned to emphasise his detachment from the Left ; there, he must at all costs avoid being stamped as a man of the Right. He counts, not simply as a man of the Centre, but as a man of the Centre-Right or of the Centre-Left.

The thrust to Right and Left becomes visible in the redistribution of the party forces which occurs between the first and second ballots. This is the last and most important of the simplifications which lighten the task of the elector. The election of 1928 again furnishes a sufficient demonstration. In point of clearness it was by no means an ideal election, but its confusion does not obscure the main phenomenon of simplification on the second ballot. Only 187 of the 612 Deputies to be chosen were elected by an absolute majority at the first ballot. In France proper—that is, leaving out of account the Colonies, which have their special electoral conditions—second ballots were necessary in 420 constituencies. The concentration of interest on serious candidatures which then occurred was striking. It is, of course, arbitrary to fix a standard by which a candidature can be regarded as serious or not. As, however, the average number of votes cast in each constituency

is well over 15,000 little injustice is done by insisting that a candidature shall attract at least 1000 votes to deserve to be counted as serious. On this basis there were no fewer than 281 constituencies in which, in 1928, the number of serious candidates was reduced to two on the second ballot. Of the rest, 130 had three candidates, while the remaining nine had four. There was no constituency in which as many as five candidates received more than 1000 votes each on the second ballot. Even among the constituencies which were left with three serious candidates, the one at the bottom of the poll, usually the Communist, was in most cases well out of the running. Without much overstatement it may be said that in about 530 of the 612 constituencies there was either an absolute majority on the first ballot or the issue virtually lay between two candidates on the second ballot, in nearly every case between a man of the Right and a man of the Left.

Not less important than the concentration itself is the method by which it is brought about. It is abundantly clear from the election returns that the division into Left and Right is commonly the result of concerted action of the parties. The candidate of the Left most favourably placed stands alone on the second ballot against the strongest candidate of the Right. On the Left this practice of "Republican discipline," as it is called, has long been followed. A similar arrangement is made on the Right, though not always so effectively. Even where no clear orders are given by the party leaders the electors themselves frequently apply the principle on their own initiative. An example taken almost at random—the election at Lons-le-Saunier in

the Jura department in 1928—serves to show the working of “Republican discipline.” The voting at the two ballots was as follows :

	1st Ballot.	2nd Ballot.
Coras, Rep. Fed. (Right) .	8574	9,207
Berthod, Rad.-Soc. .	7288	10,205
Benoit, Soc. .	2532	
Robardet, Comm. .	820	
Others . . . . .	2	216
		...

It will be observed that the candidate of the Republican Federation received 600 more votes on the second ballot than on the first, probably in part from the 400 additional voters. The Radical-Socialist received the Socialist vote on the second ballot, and probably some of the 604 votes lost by the Communist. The main features of this election are to be found in scores of other constituencies. The fall in the Communist vote is characteristic, and shows that the electors obeyed “Republican discipline” rather than the orders of the party leaders.

The second electoral district of Rennes, where there were, in 1928, six “serious” candidates at the first ballot, provides an equally clear example of concentration, in this case both to Right and Left. The following returns show the results of the two ballots :

	1st Ballot.	2nd Ballot.
Guérault, Rép. de Gauche	4946	10,025 (Right)
Thébault, Rad.-Soc. .	3622	6,678 (Left)
Bourrut-Lacouture, Rep. Fed.	3598	36
Quessot, Soc. . . .	2403	...
Deldon, Pop. Democrat .	1849	...
Carré, Comm. . . . .	1108	447

In this election the concentration of votes of Right and Left was particularly "straight." On the second ballot the *Républicain de Gauche*, if he had received the whole of the Popular Democratic vote and the votes lost by the Republican Federation, would have had a poll of 10,357. If all the Socialist votes and those lost by the Communist had been transferred to the Radical-Socialist he would have had a poll of 6686. The actual figures of the returns correspond closely with the results of these mathematical additions.

As for the general results of the second ballot, the concentration naturally produces its most clarifying effect in consolidating the votes of parties definitely belonging either to the Right or to the Left. Its reaction in the Centre is less simple. Broadly, it may be said that after the second ballot the really independent Centre, free of commitments on either side, is comparatively small. Most Moderates, while they may be able to claim that they gained the main body of their votes on their own merits at the first ballot, ultimately depend for their election on a balance of support from Radicals on the one hand or from Conservatives on the other. At the second ballot they make a bid for the votes of minorities which are themselves too small to have a hope of winning. As a consequence of this difference in electoral origin one *Républicain de Gauche* must be distinguished from another, one Independent Radical from another. Sometimes the distinction is substantial, sometimes a mere *nuance*. In the Rennes election, to which reference has been made, the *Républicain de Gauche* clearly belonged to the Centre-Right, since he received the full Conservative vote on the second ballot and had the

entire vote of the Left against him. At least forty other *Républicains de Gauche*, standing as candidates of the Democratic Alliance at the election of 1928, were in similar case. But even among the *Républicains de Gauche* there were candidates who, at the same election, were indebted to the Left. In the Orne department M. Dariac, a well-known politician, undoubtedly received Radical votes at the first ballot to enable him to defeat a more pronouncedly Conservative candidate. A candidate of the Democratic Alliance in the Meurthe-et-Moselle department defeated his rival of the Republican Federation with the help of Radical and Socialist votes. Among the candidates who described themselves as Independent Radicals the distinction between the two tendencies was more marked. A considerable number were elected in conditions which made them practically equivalent to Radical-Socialists. These, together with the Independent Radicals of the Loucheur group in the North, definitely belonged to the Left. In a number of other constituencies, by choice or necessity, ranged themselves on the Centre-Right. It would be an error to attribute these manoeuvres at the second ballot to caprice or to reprehensible opportunism. For the most part they respond to the needs of a local situation and are legitimate associations for a specific purpose. Here and there supposed tactical necessities engender incongruous party combinations, but such examples of palpable cross-voting are exceptions which prove the rule.

In this general examination the electoral system considered is that of single-member constituencies, to which a return was made in 1928 after two unsatisfactory

experiments with other systems.<sup>1</sup> In France there is a strong movement in favour of proportional representation. The defects of the existing system are patent enough. Even after the second ballot nearly one-fifth of the Deputies elected in 1928 were minority members. With a total poll of more than a million on the first ballot the Communists had only 13 candidates elected. No party obtained precisely the number of seats corresponding to its vote. Proportional representation would obviously apply a mathematical correction to these defects, but the peculiar vices of French politics are such as no electoral reform can completely cure. The main difficulties in working any system arise from the unescapable anomalies of political conditions. The country is not homogeneous. West is West and South is South; the regions do not combine to make a political unit. The parties are not homogeneous; even the best organised among them do not stand for quite the same things in one part of the country as they do in another. There are, in fact, at once too many parties and too many *nuances* within the parties. Proportional representation would not obliterate these divisions and subdivisions; it would rather accentuate them by giving to each its due measure of expression.

Much ill has been spoken by the advocates of proportional representation of the present localisation of

<sup>1</sup> At the elections of 1919 and 1924 a hybrid form of proportional representation, with the department as the unit-constituency, was in operation. It was deliberately framed so that the winning party should have its majority artificially swollen. The system gave a sweeping majority to the *bloc national* in 1919 and, by a malicious turn of fate, gave a similar exaggeration to the triumph of the Radicals and Socialists in 1924.

politics, with its tendency to the formation of coteries and petty oligarchies. M. Briand once went even so far as to describe single-member constituencies as "stagnant pools." Whatever element of justice there may be in these criticisms, the present mode of election, with its second ballot, certainly tends to check the dispersion of force which the multiplicity of parties constantly threatens to produce. The electorate acts clearly and comprehensibly in this matter, sometimes in defiance of party recommendations. In the main, Deputies belonging to the Right or the Left are elected either by an absolute majority on the first ballot or by a proper concentration of allied forces on the second. The electorate further imposes on the bulk of the Moderates a rough division into Centre-Right and Centre-Left. More could not be expected. But this modest measure of simplification is not negligible. Parties are not left in undisciplined independence. Allies are kept together by a common electoral interest. Independents have ties with the organised forces which they cannot afford to ignore. In short, the present system of election tends to encourage the formation of the larger groupings which most observers of politics regard as necessary for the proper working of Parliamentary institutions. But it is improbable that these larger groupings will ever harden into two permanent *blocs*. In spite of Cartels the Radical-Socialists and the Socialists, for instance, jealously guard their separate identities. In their hearts the French do not desire the crushing of intermediate groups between rigid formations of Right and Left. They prefer an elastic system allowing play for varied forces of opinion. What is needed for



the working of so complex a scheme—and what is surely attainable—is a stricter discipline of parties as they are. The Socialist party is reasonably well-disciplined, the Radical-Socialist less so, the Republican Federation still less so. But all the parties together have not sufficiently organised the electorate.

By the nature of its conflicts and the form of its results a general election nevertheless contributes to produce that marked separation of Parliamentary politics from electoral politics which is so singular a feature of the French system. The electorate chooses Deputies, fixes the proportions of parties and usually, though not always, indicates a prevailing trend of opinion. It leaves to the Chamber, elected for four years, the task of making Governments. A function so important, exercised over so extended a period, necessarily gives rise to a special form of politics within Parliament itself.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHAMBER: A CLOSED ARENA

OWING to the total disuse of the Constitutional procedure of dissolution the life of a Chamber of Deputies is in practice rigidly fixed. Each new Chamber assembles with the knowledge that it is elected for four years, neither more nor less. No pressure of events, no hostile movement of popular opinion can dislodge it. It may, as in 1926, almost fall into anarchy and still survive. During its lease of life, and within the limits of the Constitutional Laws, it is the master of its own organisation and the dominant force in the making and unmaking of Governments. Every Ministerial crisis is an internal affair, to be solved without reference to the electorate.

This fixity of tenure, it may be remarked, would itself practically prohibit anything more than a temporary approach to a two-party system of government, involving the long-continued existence of a Ministry sustained by a strong and coherent majority and faced by an Opposition equally well organised. In the experience of all Parliaments it is often difficult for a Government to remain in office for four years, either to its own satisfaction or to the advantage of the country. It grows weary or loses authority. It mismanages its legislation or commits grave administrative errors. It is torn by dissension or puts itself in the wrong in a quarrel with the Upper

Chamber. In Great Britain any one of these causes might provoke an appeal to the country. No recourse to that supreme arbitrament is feasible where there is fixity of Parliamentary tenure. If a Government falls in France it is for the Chamber to produce another one. In most cases the very nature of the emergency necessitates a displacement of majority. The new Government, even if it borrows members from its predecessor, can rarely be of precisely the same pattern or rely on exactly the same Parliamentary support. It cannot live unless a section of the old majority joins forces with groups to which it has previously been opposed. A rigid division into a Governmental majority and a permanent Opposition would cause a deadlock. Under such conditions a deadlock would certainly have occurred in 1905, when the Combes Ministry, after three years of office, found it necessary to retire. The Chamber was, at the time, as clearly divided into Right and Left as the French Chamber has ever been. The Combes Cabinet had been partisan, supported by the combative force of the anti-clerical *bloc des gauches*. That force remained essentially intact after the resignation of the Ministry. Yet a Government must be found. The Chamber was unaltered but the majority must be changed. The upshot of the crisis was the formation of a Ministry by Rouvier, a Moderate. In order to produce the new majority a large body of Moderates, hitherto in Opposition, co-operated with the Left to pass the Separation Act. This example presents features peculiar to itself, but it supports a conclusion which is quite general. In a Chamber bound to continue in existence until its mandate expires the mere liability to Ministerial

crises calls for elasticity in the distribution of Parliamentary forces. It militates against the creation of a two-party system and favours the formation of groups.

It is thus in a Chamber isolated from the electorate and already biased against any permanent formations of Left and Right that the parties perform their function as representatives of the popular will. Fresh from a general election, they enter a closed arena within which, for four years, their conflicts will be entirely confined. This transition is of capital consequence. It imposes on the parties a very real separation between their action in Parliament and their action in the country. It produces, in a special sense, "Parliamentary politics." In the constituencies the parties have made their professions of faith, expounded their programmes and given their several pledges. Here, every party is in a minority. Not one of them has undisputed authority to impose its policy. Any Government which may be set up must depend on a majority formed by coalition, after negotiation. And negotiation may mean, and often does mean, the temporary abandonment by a party of some important project of its programme, or the acceptance of some little-loved measure on which a prospective ally insists. It may even involve delicate questions of association with groups whose support, however useful in Parliament, is embarrassing to the party's interest in the country. Nor, as has been seen, is any coalition likely to remain intact, without secessions or fresh additions, throughout the four years of existence of the Chamber. In such conditions a party in the Chamber, however controlled by its electoral organisation and however faithful to pledges, must have some freedom of move-

ment.<sup>1</sup> Parties in all Parliaments rightly claim this autonomy, which permits them to deal, especially in unsettled times, with urgent and unforeseen issues,<sup>2</sup> but in the fluidity of French Parliamentary conditions its enjoyment is, so to speak, systematic. When the parties come up from the constituencies and cross the threshold of the Palais Bourbon they move on to a different plane of political struggle. The Chamber is a little world apart, a world of compromise and bargain. It is a community living its own life, constantly pre-occupied, indeed, with the movement of opinion in the electorate which created it, but shut off from its origins for a fixed term.

So independent is the life of the Chamber that it has, in a very real sense, a party system of its own. It is bound to form one, because the system provided for it by the electoral organisations is incomplete. It is true that six of the seven electoral parties have their corresponding groups in the Chamber, but the seventh, the Democratic Alliance, which is one of the most

<sup>1</sup> This necessity is openly or tacitly admitted by all parties except the Socialist. The Socialist party attempts to hold its group in the Chamber in strict discipline. In doing so, however, it sometimes reveals the inconveniences of such control as well as illuminating the distinction between a party's interest in Parliament and its interest in the country. In 1930 two-thirds of the Socialist group in the Chamber were, on "Parliamentary" grounds, in favour of joining with the Radicals in forming a Government, but the National Council, on "electoral" grounds, refused its consent to the project. As an extreme contrast may be cited the action of M. Herriot, the Radical leader, in accepting office in M. Poincaré's National Union Government, during the urgent crisis of 1926, without previously consulting the party organisation.

<sup>2</sup> The action of the British Liberals in forming a Coalition with the Conservatives during the war is a case in point. Numerous examples could also be found in the actions of British parties while minority Labour Governments were in office during the troubled period since the war.

important, has no group of its own, and its members are split into several fractions. And besides these there is always a considerable number of Deputies, elected, either individually or in the name of vaguer local groupings, as Independent Radicals or Independent Nationalists or anti-Socialist Moderates. In great majority the independents congregate in the Centre, and the manner in which the Centre splits up into groups gives its special character to the party system of any given Chamber. The construction of a group system is, in fact, the first real business of a new Chamber, though it does not appear on the order paper. During days of busy canvassing in the lobbies the Chamber is adjusting its internal organisation to the situation created by the election. The primary motive of Deputies of the Centre in this important operation is inspired by the circumstances of their success at the polls. A member seeks to place himself in that quarter of the Chamber which most nearly corresponds to his electoral attitude. He naturally consorts with others who, in their constituencies, have majorities of the same complexion as his own. Independent Radicals combine on one side and Independent Nationalists on the other. But the association of like with like, though it is the main principle on which groups are formed and ranged in due order from Left to Right, is not the only principle. There is another early preoccupation, less evident but scarcely less important in its consequences, which the Centre shares with the rest of the Chamber. Parties, independent groups and individuals alike are trying to discern the physiognomy of the assembly, and particularly to forecast the majority—or the various

possible majorities—which it is capable of producing. Groups are rarely content simply to represent shades of electoral opinion. They look forward to taking an active part in government. In the making of Ministries, which is to be one of the main functions of the Chamber for four years to come, a group has a bargaining power depending partly on its voting strength and partly on its position in the Chamber; united, and strategically well placed, it can obtain office for members who, individually, would have little chance of satisfying their ambitions. Hence the importance of the calculation of the visible and latent tendencies of the newly elected assembly. In any Chamber the groups of the Centre are thus formed, and choose their position, on the double basis of electoral considerations derived from the immediate past and Parliamentary considerations concerning the immediate future. Both these considerations, in varying degree, continue to be active throughout the life of a Legislature, and their interplay contributes in no small measure to the instability of equilibrium which so often marks the party system.

The staple framework of the party system of a Chamber is constituted by the regular party groups. These form, in any Legislature, what may be called the fixed entities. On the Right is the Republican Federation (or Union). In the Centre is the small group of the Popular Democratic party. On the Left are the Radical-Socialists, the Republican-Socialists, the Socialists and the Communists. To these may be added a body of 30 or 40 Deputies who belong to no party, but about whose position there is no ambiguity; they are the reactionaries, many of them Royalists, who sit on the extreme

Right. The following plan shows the approximate numerical strength of each of these fixed entities in Chambers of 1924 and 1928 :<sup>1</sup>

## STRENGTH OF FIXED ENTITIES IN CHAMBER

		1924.	1928.
RIGHT .	" No Group " . . . . .	34	44
	Republican Federation . . . . .	100	101
CENTRE .	Popular Democrats . . . . .	13	18
LEFT .	Radical-Socialists . . . . .	139	125
	Republican-Socialists . . . . .	44	{ 18
	Socialists . . . . .	94	{ 12
	Communists . . . . .	28	13
Totals . . . . .		<u>452</u>	<u>431</u>

It will thus be seen that, even if the reactionaries of the Right be included among the fixed entities—an arrangement which some would consider arbitrary—the groups constituting the party framework numbered altogether, in 1924, only about 450 Deputies in a Chamber of 581, and in 1928 only about 430 in a Chamber of 612. There remained, therefore, an assemblage of Deputies in the Centre, numbering roughly 130 in one case and 170 or 180 in the other, to form separate groups and complete the system. The proportion of Deputies collected in this "swamp"—as it is known in the *argot* of Parliament—is unquestionably high. If the Centre were to remain an amorphous mass no majority would be more than precarious. Fortunately the tendency to anarchy

<sup>1</sup> The figures are useful as giving an idea of the relative importance of the parties, but as the strength of a group changes by secession and fresh adhesions they are only approximate. The Republican-Socialists, who formed one group in 1924, split into two sections in 1928.



is mitigated by a certain tentative order in the distribution of forces. Formations of Independent Radicals and Nationalists repeat themselves, on more or less the same bases, in Chamber after Chamber. A respectable number of members of the Democratic Alliance always finds its way into the group of the *Républicains de Gauche*. Finally, it may be said that comparatively few of the Deputies of the Centre are entirely free agents. Most of them have electoral obligations to the parties on Right or Left. It is certainly unfortunate for the business of government, however, that with seven electoral organisations in the country there should be eleven groups in one Chamber and thirteen in another.

From the point of view of internal organisation there are two types of Chamber. There is the type resulting from a decisive election on a clear issue. There is the more complex type elected at a time when there is confusion either of parties or of questions. In the former case the initial majority in the Chamber is constituted with comparative ease. The Centre divides essentially into Right and Left. A confused election, on the other hand, almost inevitably produces a larger assemblage in the Centre, whose constituent elements may dissolve into groups at once more numerous and less clearly defined. The thrust to Right and Left is in this case less effective, and the true resultant majority in the Chamber is less easily determined. For purposes of illustration it is here more than ever necessary to have recourse to recent elections, since the names and configurations of groups change so frequently that after a few years many of them become meaningless. The Chamber of 1924 may stand as representing the first

type, as the election of that year was fought on a definite issue. The victorious *Cartel des Gauches*, which included the Radical-Socialists, the Republican-Socialists and the Socialists, had altogether 287 Deputies in a Chamber of 581. The Communists, whose small force should properly have gone to swell the majority on the Left, must be left out of account, since they opposed any and every Government. The Right and Centre-Right taken together numbered 228 Deputies. It was evident, especially having regard to the overwhelmingly Nationalist character of the previous Chamber, that opinion in the country had moved decisively to the Left. In such circumstances the initial problem of Government and majority was rapidly solved. About forty Independent Radicals, forming a group known as the *Gauche Radicale*, attached themselves to the Cartel and brought the Radical Government of M. Herriot into office. The rest of the Chamber constituted the Opposition.

In contrast with the election of 1924, that of 1928 was one of confusion. M. Poincaré's Ministry of National Union, which included representatives of both the Republican Federation and the Radical-Socialist party, was in office. But the Government only held together for one purpose, and before the election that purpose had been accomplished ; the franc was stabilised and the monetary crisis was over. The election was virtually a personal appeal of M. Poincaré to the country, over the heads of the parties. The new Chamber quickly displayed the characteristics which might be expected from the distracting conditions of its origin. At least two-thirds of its members were declared "Poincarists," but they had no other bond of union.

There was no large association of natural allies capable of forming a majority determined on policy and programme. The vague formula of "National Union," which covered the whole Chamber with the exception of the Socialists and Communists, obviously afforded no basis on which a group system could be founded. Under that vast umbrella any and every group, large or small, old or new, could take shelter. Once the compelling occasion for it had passed, "National Union," for all its pretence of knitting parties together, left them in fact free to pursue their own devices, and even encouraged the formation of fresh groupings. It was in these conditions that the Chamber of 1928 proceeded to fashion its party system. It had, to begin with, the usual fixed entities—the reactionaries of the extreme Right and the six groups formed by the Republican Federation, the Popular Democrats, the Radical-Socialists, the Socialists and the Communists. The Centre was composed of the abnormally large number of 170 or 180 members ready to be distributed in various groups founded on the most diverse principles. They distributed themselves to such effect that they produced no fewer than five groups. The following plan shows their names, their numbers (in brackets) and their approximate positions in the Chamber :

#### CHAMBER OF 1928 : CENTRE GROUPS

CENTRE-RIGHT	. Action Démocratique et Sociale (29). (Independent Nationalists.)
CENTRE	. Républicains de Gauche (64). Gauche Sociale et Radicale (18).
CENTRE-LEFT	. Indépendants de Gauche (14). Gauche Radicale (53).

Three of these groups—the *Action Démocratique et Sociale*, the *Républicains de Gauche* and the *Gauche Radicale*—were familiar combinations, composed respectively of Nationalists, Moderates and Radicals. The other two were innovations. The small group of the *Gauche Sociale et Radicale* was formed round M. Franklin-Bouillon, formerly a Radical, but violently opposed to the policy of Locarno. The still smaller group of the *Indépendants de Gauche* was composed of Ishmaels, most of them of Leftward sympathies, who carried the notion of independence so far that they never passed resolutions and never submitted themselves to a common discipline in voting.

Altogether, this Chamber of confusion contained thirteen groups. Six of these—including the Communists, the Popular Democrats and the two sections of Republican-Socialists—had fewer than twenty members each. The very number and character of these divisions went to show that the election had not produced a clear result capable of being expressed by the immediate formation of an appropriate and well-knit majority. “National Union,” the Governmental combination already in existence, survived only for a few uneasy months. In the end it became apparent that the least unstable of the various possible majorities was a socially Conservative one based on a coalition of the Centre and the Right, but before this was finally demonstrated the Chamber had twice experimented with combinations leaning on the Centre and the Left. It was for a long time uncertain, that is to say, whether the centre of gravity of the Chamber was slightly to the Right or slightly to the Left.

It is obvious that the initial majority in a Chamber of the first type, resulting from a decisive election, must be essentially partisan. The organised electoral parties will form it and will assume control of it. In presence of such a combination the groups of the Centre are driven almost irresistibly to join either the Governmental forces or the Opposition; the real Centre, remaining totally unattached, is necessarily small. Of these genuinely partisan majorities there are two kinds, one depending on the Right and the other dominated by the Left. In France, however, the opportunities for the enjoyment of real partisan power by no means present themselves with the same frequency and in equal measure to the two sides. It is a highly significant fact that since the beginning of the century the parties of the Left have had effective majorities more often than those of the Right. The Leftward bias is not accidental; it is an expression of the bias of the Republic itself. The right is handicapped. Prejudices rooted in the past have so far, indeed, prevented the formation of any Government openly directed by the Conservatives with the Conservative leader as Prime Minister. Even at this day, in spite of the diminished acuity of historic controversies, a Ministry with the President of the Republican Federation at its head would be widely denounced as a challenge to the Republic. It would frighten the Moderates and would probably antagonise the Senate. The chief beneficiaries of this bias of the régime have been the Radicals. They were the backbone of the combative majorities which supported Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes, and of that which brought into power the curiously disappointing Clemenceau Ministry of 1906. Their ascendancy con-

tinued until the outbreak of the European war. A singular fact illustrates the favour which they have enjoyed ; there have been only two Ministries whose members were drawn almost exclusively from a single party—that of M. Léon Bourgeois in 1896, and that of M. Herriot in 1924—and both were Radical.

During the last thirty years the formation of a majority based mainly on the parties of the Right has always been a more delicate affair. But for the “Republican” bias a majority based on the Republican Federation would be the natural alternative to a majority dependent on the Radical-Socialists. On the social issue there is no reason why the social Conservatives who form the bulk of the Moderates should not be counted as an integral part of the Right. In fact, a Governmental majority has on several occasions been formed on those lines, but always with a camouflage. Whatever it may be in reality, it must at all costs avoid the appearance of being a majority of the Right. The Moderates must not incur the discredit of being “in league with *la Réaction*.” The Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior must be Moderates. The old “political” Conservatism, the Conservatism which reaches back to an anti-Republican origin, is, in short, compelled to resort to Fabian tactics in Parliament. It cannot form a Government or directly control a Government which it supports. In default of an out-and-out Conservative Administration there are two kinds of Government which the Republican Federation is able and willing to serve. It can enter a majority of National Union—an exceptional and artificial formation—or a

majority constituted on the model of the *bloc national* of 1919. Once such a combination is formed, it can exact some payment for its co-operation. Its relations with the Tardieu Ministry of March 1929 were characteristic. The majority supporting that Government closely resembled the *bloc national*. For ordinary purposes it brought together the Right and all the Centre groups except the Indépendants de Gauche and a section of the Gauche Radicale. In return for its vote the Republican Federation obtained three or four offices for its members. It was doubtless at its instigation also that M. Tardieu omitted from the Ministerial Declaration the formal engagement to preserve the *lois laïques* to which every previous Government for thirty years had subscribed.

*Bloc des Gauches* on one side, *bloc national* on the other : these two formations represent the nearest approach to party government of which the French political system is capable. One contains the full strength of the organised electoral parties of the Left and the other concentrates, as far as it can be concentrated, the power of the Right. Such combinations have the maximum chance of carrying into effect the mandate which the parties have claimed before the electors. They are indeed coalitions, but they are coalitions of parties which have certain principles and certain legislative objects in common. Radicals and Socialists may reasonably be expected to be in general agreement about foreign policy ; they are both favourable to trade unionism ; they both prefer direct to indirect taxation ; there are certain social reforms which, however inadequate from the Marxist point of view, they can unite to pass. A *bloc national* may be counted

on to adopt a Nationalist policy in foreign affairs, to concern itself conspicuously with national defence, to protect, in domestic legislation, the large economic and financial interests. If a regular alternation of these majorities of opposite tendencies were possible there would be a rough, though still halting, approximation to a two-party system. In fact, however, there is no such regular swing of the pendulum. It is not even certain that a given Chamber can produce either one or the other of these combinations. There is always a tendency towards concentration to Right and Left, but it is not usually effective enough to create a clean and durable division. Even if the Left or the Right succeeds in constituting a majority it commonly comes to depend, in greater or less degree, on the Centre. The *bloc national* indeed requires a large participation of Centre groups from the start. In so far as Centre support is utilised, the partisan majority is diluted. And dilution may continue to the point at which no partisan majority can any longer be said to exist.

It is the admixture of Centre groups which renders possible the combinations whose variety is a subject of ceaseless astonishment to the observer of French politics. It would be a dreary and not very profitable task to present the whole series of possible permutations or the complex manœuvres which bring them into being. It is necessary, however, to show that there is a degree of order in the apparent chaos, and for this purpose it is useful to examine certain types of combinations which frequently recur. The Radical-Socialist group is so often the hinge of these combinations that they can best



be considered from the point of view of that group. The first arrangement which offers itself to the Radicals is a partisan alliance with the Socialists, such as that which produced the partisan Herriot Government of 1924. If that combination fails to constitute or to maintain a majority it may remedy its misfortune by simple enlargement ; it may attract to itself some neighbouring group which has hitherto been outside its bounds. In such a case the original parties retain their initiative, but they are not absolute masters in their own house. The "enlarged Cartel" which M. Herriot attempted to establish in 1926 would, if it had been successful, have been an example of this form of coalition. But occasions have been frequent on which neither of these majorities was feasible, yet the participation of the Radical group, usually the largest in the Chamber, has remained necessary to any Government which could hope to live. In such circumstances a majority can only be made by a further advance into the Centre. Besides the Radicals it will include the Republican-Socialists, the Independent Radicals and a sufficient fraction of Moderates of the Centre proper. The Socialists, less able to join such a mixed company, will remain uncommitted, but will often offer a benevolent neutrality. The Radicals are the mainspring of the coalition, and the head of the Government may be a Radical, but a large proportion of the chief offices is given to representatives of the Centre, and the policy announced is so framed as not to shock the susceptibilities of the Moderates. This is a Government of "Concentration on the Left" and therefore belongs to a type which has been familiar in the Chambers of the last quarter of a century. All these forms of coalition

have at one time or another proved to be practicable, and Governments of "Concentration on the Left" have not been the least efficient. It may be, however, that the conditions in a given Chamber necessitate a much larger participation of the Centre than any which has so far been considered. The Radicals may still be the strongest group in such a coalition, but they have no claim to dominate it. They have submitted to a compromise which constrains them to sacrifice most of their initiative and postpone all the more controversial measures of their party programme. They have entered a combination which is the most nearly neutral of those which can pretend to be based in any degree on the Left. Their position is delicate. They are mortgaging their character as an advanced party. They are risking a conflict with the Socialists, and in conditions which give their rivals an electoral advantage. Such a combination is thus situated very nearly at the meeting-place of the two opposing tendencies in the Chamber. An increase in the proportion of Moderates would compel the Radicals to withdraw.

The first half of the Legislature of 1924 furnishes a good example of this gradual progression of the axis of the Governmental majority from the Left to the Centre-Left. The Herriot Ministry, the offspring of the *Cartel des Gauches*, was almost entirely Radical-Socialist, and had only one Under-Secretary taken from the *Gauche Radicale*, the group of independents which had adhered to the *Cartel*. The two Painlevé Administrations which succeeded were slightly less partisan, and the second included three Ministers from the *Gauche Radicale*. This latter Government was nevertheless brought down

by the defection of the bulk of the Gauche Radicale, who considered it too advanced. The result of this series of operations was that the next Ministry, that of M. Briand, which was far less partisan than its predecessors, took five of its members from the Gauche Radicale and one from the Moderates. Instances of the change in character of a majority brought about by increasing recourse to the Centre groups could be found in the history of nearly every Chamber. As has already been pointed out, the procedure is inevitable and, as long as it serves a genuine political purpose, quite legitimate. The Centre here performs its proper function as a mobile reserve which can reinforce a failing coalition or provide a necessary makeweight for a new one.

At first sight compromise majorities of this kind may often seem to be the result of accident or caprice. A Government falls. For a week or ten days afterwards it may be uncertain who will form the new Ministry. It may even be impossible to forecast whether the new majority will incline to the Right or to the Left. There are, however, certain reliable clues by which the mysterious operations of a crisis can always be understood. First, the elements which constitute a majority are never scattered over the whole Chamber, from one end to the other; they form a continuous section of the spectrum of groups. Secondly, the tendency towards division into Right and Left is always active, though it varies greatly in strength. If these clues are followed it will become apparent that most of the complex crises are really a battle between the parties of Right and Left for the favours of the Centre. In a confused Chamber, in

which the Centre is extensive and split up into small groups, victory may even go alternately to one side and the other, with only a short interval between the two occasions. An instance of this rapid change of orientation occurred in the Chamber of 1928. In December 1930, M. Tardieu's Ministry, which leaned on the Right, resigned after a defeat in the Senate. It was succeeded by a Government formed by M. Steeg, which inclined to the Left. M. Steeg, in turn, was beaten in the Chamber after forty days of office, and made way for M. Laval, who once more relied on a majority leaning on the Right. The composition of the Steeg majority and that of the Laval majority were revealed in two critical divisions—the first in December 1930, and the second in January 1931. The table on the following page shows the votes of the various groups on these occasions.

It will be observed that, leaving out of account the Communists (who voted against both Governments), the Steeg majority started from the Left and reached its extreme limit in the Centre group of the *Républicains de Gauche*, from which, however, it received only five votes. The Laval majority stretched from the extreme Right to the Centre-Left, obtaining the bulk of the votes of the *Gauche Radicale*. The passage from one majority to the other was made possible chiefly by a change in the behaviour of two Centre groups—the *Indépendants de Gauche* and the *Gauche Radicale* (shown in italics in the table). The former gave two-thirds of its vote to the Left in the first division and two-thirds to the Right in the second. The *Gauche Radicale*, which consisted of 34 members,

## CHAMBER OF 1928: STEEG AND LAVAL MAJORITIES

STEEG.		GROUPS.	LAVAL.	
For.	Against.		For.	Against.
5	7	Unattached Members . .	11	5
...	37	No Group . . . .	38	...
...	85	Fédération Républicaine . .	85	...
...	31	Action Démocratique . .	29	...
...	18	Démocrates Populaires . .	18	...
5	53	Républicains de Gauche . .	59	...
1	14	Gauche Sociale et Radicale . .	15	...
13	6	<i>Indépendants de Gauche</i> . .	15	7
24	18	<i>Gauche Radicale</i> . . . .	35	10
12	1	Républicains-Socialistes . .	4	9
112	...	Radicaux-Socialistes . .	...	99
14	...	Républicains-Socialistes Français . . . .	1	12
106	...	Socialistes . . . .	...	105
...	9	Communistes . . . .	...	11
292	284	. . Totals . . . .	312	258

gave 24 votes to the Left in the first division, but only 10 in the second; it gave 18 votes to the Right in the first division, but no fewer than 35 in the second.

So thorough a *volte-face* in the attitude of the Chamber is unusual; within the space of a few weeks there was an oscillation of power from Right to Left and from Left to Right. More often a change of majority is effected by slight variations in the "doses" of groups composing it, with no radical alteration in tendency. The transition

from the Steeg Ministry to the Laval Ministry was an acute phase of the struggle between the organised parties for the support of the Centre. M. Steeg and the Radical Socialists momentarily succeeded in detaching certain elements of the Centre from their old connections, but failed to hold them. M. Laval drew most of the waverers back to their former position. The fact that such a reversal of orientation could occur may seem to argue a high degree of fickleness or indiscipline in the groups which were the main agents of the change. But that scarcely flattering explanation, while it cannot be ignored, is not adequate. There were in the Chamber of 1928 certain elements which, without too great a strain on consciences, could transfer their allegiance from one side to the other. They could form the left wing of one combination or the right wing of another. In their movements they were inspired by several comprehensible motives, some Parliamentary and some electoral. In Parliamentary politics they accepted opportunities which presented themselves of taking an active part in government ; both M. Steeg and M. Laval were careful to recruit the members of their Cabinets from all the sections of their majorities, giving liberal representation to the doubtful wing. At the same time more general electoral considerations influenced the waverers. If the individual records of Steeg "converts" were examined it would be found, in a large number of cases, that they had either been under obligations to Radical voters at the last election or expected to be so at the next. They acted with one eye on the Parliamentary situation and the other on their constituencies.

For good or ill, coalitions in which the Centre plays a prominent part are frequently necessary. Nearly every Chamber, sooner or later, has to fall back upon them. The liability is so constant, indeed, that it has produced one of the most interesting features of the French Parliamentary system. It has called into being a special type of statesman. Such a combination of groups necessitates a corresponding compromise in the composition of the Government. In many cases a party leader, by the very fact that he is a party leader, is disqualified for the position of Prime Minister. To form and command the Cabinet there is need of a politician who is virtually detached from the parties and whose standing in Parliament is sufficient to give him authority. It is he who will choose the Ministers, negotiate with the component groups and frame a policy. In all these operations he will be inspired partly by his own conceptions, but also by the necessity of being agreeable to his majority. He is thus at once a statesman acting by virtue of his personal authority and an arbiter, or political broker. So important is this function that it has become, to all intents and purposes, a profession.

Among its numerous practitioners are to be counted some of the most famous men of the Republic. Both M. Briand and M. Poincaré, for instance, really belong to this class of arbiters. It is evident that the prestige of such distinguished men introduces a peculiar element into government, an element which is in a certain degree independent of the coalition which they lead. A Ministry has not seldom been an instrument by means of which a powerful states-

man has carried out a personal policy. In such conditions the coalition of large compromise is at its best. It produces a strong Government. The energy and prestige of the Prime Minister are a substitute, and sometimes an equivalent, for the driving force of a well-organised party.<sup>1</sup>

But any device of government must be judged, not at its best alone, but in its ordinary manifestations and at its worst. And, apart from certain conspicuous and exceptional successes in producing efficient Governments under powerful non-party statesmen, it must be said that the tendency to nebulous coalition is a vice of the French Parliamentary system. It is a principal cause of the series of obscure and apparently frivolous crises, leading from one makeshift Government to another, which so often distract the Chamber and bewilder public opinion. Each combination in turn is essentially precarious and often lacks aim and momentum. Where it is a question of conciliating several insufficiently disciplined groups, drawn to each other only by slender or momentary considerations of interest, Ministry-promoting is an adventurous business. Disputes about the "dose" of representation in the Cabinet to be accorded to each of the constituent groups, the petty calculations of advantage and the intrigues of the personally ambitious make a sorry spectacle. In a confused Chamber, in which the Centre is peppered with small groups, each of them capable of becoming a makeweight in some ephemeral majority, promoters of Ministries sometimes go to singular lengths to purchase a score or so of votes or to add a desired tinge to the already

<sup>1</sup> The function of the non-party statesmen is discussed in Chapter VI.



variegated scheme of parties. When M. Poincaré lost his Radical Ministers in November 1928, he protected his Government against the suspicion of being too Moderate by taking no fewer than five Ministers from a dissident group of Republican-Socialists numbering thirteen. In one Government or another of the Legislature of 1928 three of the fourteen *Indépendants de Gauche* and three of the eighteen members of the *Gauche Sociale et Radicale* attained office. To find places for some of these small guerilla chieftains under-secretaryships are often multiplied beyond any conceivable requirements of administration. Representative men are crowded out or voluntarily stand aside. And the public, which has never even heard of the more insignificant groups, looks on sardonically at these games of Parliamentary chess.

Of the three main forms of governmental combination—frankly partisan Governments of the Left, disguised Governments of the Right and Governments of compromise—the last are numerous enough to be considered as part of the regular machinery of the French Parliamentary system. There are observers who believe that, in the ambiguous conditions of French politics, Governments of compromise are the very basis of the system, the only logical outcome of the conflicts of parties. Some ingenious minds have advanced the theory that France faces “politically” towards the Left but “socially” towards the Right; that is to say, she is socially Conservative. This view may be translated into the concrete proposition—for which there is obviously some support in the facts of experience—that neither a Government of the Right nor a Government

of the Left can live long, because both antagonise the same body of bourgeois Republican opinion, the one alarming its Republicanism and the other its bourgeois Conservatism. And it is precisely this body of bourgeois opinion, the potential enemy of partisan Governments on either side, which is represented by the Centre groups of the Chamber. From these considerations it is only a short step to the suggestion that the Centre, which contributes so largely to successive coalitions, should resolve itself into a Parliamentary party and take over the task of organising Governments. The notion is attractive. A Government of compromise, it may be argued, should be frankly in the hands of the section of the Chamber which, by its very composition, is permanently turned towards compromise. In stability and in power of action the Centre would gain greatly if there were one large association instead of a congeries of small and fickle groups.

In spite of these favourable factors, however, the obstacles in the way of creating a Centre party, either electoral or Parliamentary, have proved insuperable. The case for an organised Centre was particularly strong in the Chamber of 1928, and it did not fail to impress certain politicians. Superficially, the nucleus of such a combination seemed to be immediately available. The Democratic Alliance had the names of 110 Deputies on its books. The most reliable majorities which the Chamber had produced—those which supported the Ministries of M. Poincaré, M. Tardieu and M. Laval—were mainly dependent on the Democratic Alliance. Their policies were inspired by the Democratic Alliance. There was a plausible case for a proposal to use this

electoral organisation to weld the Centre into a coherent force in Parliament, and the attempt was duly made. But the fundamental difficulties of the operation soon appeared. A glance at the distribution of the members of the Democratic Alliance in the Chamber reveals them. The following table shows the groups among which they were divided, the number of members of the Democratic Alliance attached to each group being given in brackets :

CHAMBER OF 1928 : THE DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE		
DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE (110).	Republican Federation and Independents (22).	RIGHT.
	Action Démocratique (16).	CENTRE- RIGHT.
	Républicains de Gauche (51).	CENTRE.
	Gauche Sociale et Radicale (4).	
	Indépendants de Gauche (4).	CENTRE- LEFT.
	Gauche Radicale (13).	

This dispersion shows the difficulty which the Democratic Alliance itself would have in constituting a single group in Parliament corresponding to its electoral organisation. The 51 Républicains de Gauche might indeed form a disciplined body. But the 22 members of the Right and the 13 members of the Gauche Radicale are separated from each other by a very wide difference in electoral origin. This diversity of electoral interest militates against close union of the sections. The party suffers from the internal strain of the opposing

tendencies which urge it to Right and Left respectively. Nor is it certain that the Democratic Alliance genuinely desires strict unity. Time after time its annual congresses have rejected proposals that it should form itself into a Parliamentary party. It shrinks from discipline. It is not even exclusively a Centre party, but stretches out tentacles into the parties on either side. In a word, it prefers the ambiguity from which it draws electoral profit to the clearness of definition which would make it a more coherent Parliamentary force.

Similar objections present themselves, with no less cogency, to projects for the co-ordination of the Centre groups by the agency of an ' inter-group,' a Parliamentary association totally independent of electoral organisations and designed merely to ensure co-operation during the life of a given Legislature. Attempts have been made to use this device, but they have invariably failed. Even this unambitious and temporary union is irksome to the constituent groups. If the Democratic Alliance cannot set its own house in order, still less can the independents outside that organisation be expected to come together. Independent Radicals dislike too visible and regular contact with Nationalists. The young and energetic Popular Democratic party is jealous of its autonomy. The directors of the Democratic Alliance may, on occasion, exercise a real though unacknowledged leadership, and may rally the groups of the Centre to make a socially Conservative majority. But the whole experience of Parliamentary practice shows that the Centre, however strong in numbers, cannot for long constitute a homogeneous force acting

with positive and independent initiative. It is nearly always working, on balance, either for the Right or for the Left.

This analysis of the complex character of the Centre makes it possible to measure with fair accuracy the importance of electoral considerations in Parliamentary politics. M. Barthou, who readily lends himself to the exaggeration of a *boutade*, once said that a Chamber spent the first half of its life in finding the majority resulting from the last election, and the second half in preparing for the next. It is certain that electoral considerations are always active. Nor is this to be regretted. In a system of representative government the fear of the elector, it has been remarked, is the beginning of wisdom. In France it mitigates the effect of the four years' isolation of the Chamber. It maintains that thrust to Right and Left which tends to place power in the hands of the organised parties, where it can be used most effectively. But it does not operate with the same unvarying force all the time; it is naturally at its maximum immediately after one election and immediately before the next. At the beginning of a Legislature electoral considerations play an important part, along with the exigencies of the Parliamentary situation, in determining the formation and distribution of groups. Once the group system is thus settled there follows a period in which the Chamber enjoys the full advantage of its separation from the electorate, and Parliamentary tactics take precedence. This is the time of true "Parliamentary politics," when parties and groups engage in manœuvres and drift into compromises with which the country is only indirectly concerned and which, in fact, it is often unable to follow

or understand. As the end of the Legislature approaches, however, electoral considerations resume and intensify their influence. A lively interest in the movement of public opinion manifests itself. Parties and groups accommodate their tactics to the requirements, or what they suppose to be the requirements, of the coming battle. This revived preoccupation may have the most diverse effects, according to the circumstances of the day. If the electoral symptoms are favourable to the existing majority its ascendancy will be confirmed and it will attract new recruits ; if they are unfavourable, the majority will become precarious. In any event this restlessness of the end of the Legislature disturbs the fragile order of the group system. It affects the action, not merely of groups, but of Deputies as individuals. A Deputy who has been content to occupy a position which brought him Parliamentary advantage seeks to escape from it when he finds it electorally embarrassing. Discipline is more difficult to maintain than ever. In particular, members of the Centre, insufficiently checked by a sense of corporate interest, can be stampeded. It is only necessary for a private member to put forward some amendment to the Budget which is obviously popular—a reduction in taxation or a pension for ex-servicemen—and a Governmental majority is at once in danger. In accessés of demagogic fever members often descend to flagrant abuses of the rule of the Chamber which permits the vote of an absent Deputy to be cast for him by his group. Many important divisions are followed by the announcement of “rectifications of votes,” the Deputies concerned declaring that while they had been registered as having voted on one side

they really intended to vote on the other, or to abstain. A majority given out in the Chamber—the only majority which legally counts—may almost disappear in the report in the *Journal Officiel*, which takes account of rectifications. A single instance will suffice to show the magnitude of the abuse. On November 7, 1929, a vote announced in the Chamber gave a majority of 310 to 270 for the Government, but the figures of the same division were given in the *Journal Officiel* as 287 against 284. In reality the rectification is simply a manœuvre, of which the object is clear. A Deputy votes with the majority—or allows friends to cast his vote for him—in order to keep the Government in office, and then “rectifies” in order to please his electors. The character of the phenomenon is so indisputable that the *Temps* has given it the name of the *repentir électoral*.

From this general review of the conditions of life of the French Chamber certain conclusions may reasonably be drawn. First, the Chamber performs fairly well its function as an organ of representative government. It permits the expression of every variety of opinion. It reflects only too faithfully the ambiguities which successive revolutions have created in the body politic itself. Secondly, it conforms its action in the main to the characteristic rules of the Parliamentary system, with certain variations caused by the fixity of tenure of the Chamber. Thirdly, it is badly organised for the task of producing stable and authoritative Governments. There are six fixed party groups, already too many to allow of the easy formation of steady and well-assorted coalitions. These organised forces are hampered in their movements by a less disciplined mass in the Centre, whose

action cannot be relied upon with certainty or for long; The instability of Governments is so marked that it raises the fundamental problem of authority in the State.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This question is dealt with in Chapter VII.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE NON-PARTY STATESMEN

So much of the history of the Republic is concerned with the achievements of non-party statesmen that their place in the political system merits a special consideration. To many foreign observers M. Poincaré and M. Briand are the most obviously representative men in modern French politics. M. Poincaré has formed five Ministries and M. Briand more than twice as many. Yet neither has ever led a Parliamentary party. All their Governments, without exception, have been based on coalitions of parties of which they were not the titular heads, but which accepted their command. The association was purely occasional. No permanent link connected the coalition with the Prime Minister. Allegiance ended with the resignation of the Government. So far as their relations with the parties were concerned these statesmen were, in effect, independent arbiters called in to conciliate and command forces momentarily allied. In promoting Ministerial combinations they performed the function of political brokers. Nor do they stand alone. In recent years M. Tardieu, M. Barthou and M. Laval—to mention only three names in a list which might be extended—have acted in the same capacity in forming, or attempting to form, similar Governments of compromise.

The necessity of these combinations, and therefore of

suitable leaders for them, has been sufficiently demonstrated. In the conditions of French Parliamentary life there must be available at any given moment a reserve of such men ready to be called upon. Few persons outside a circle of theoretical Constitutionalists regard the employment of non-party statesmen as an anomaly. Nobody is surprised to read a leading article in a newspaper calling for a reinforcement in "our team of Prime Ministers." The practice, in short, has long been *dans les mœurs*. Yet it may be permitted to doubt whether, from the point of view of the healthy development of Parliamentary institutions, this device of government is not as dangerous as it is momentarily advantageous. While it makes up for the defects of an incomplete party system, it tends to perpetuate the insufficiency of organisation. The career of a successful non-party statesman holds out such prospects of distinction that it attracts many men whose talents would fit them admirably for the public service of leading and inspiring the parties which, after all, incorporate the real political forces of the nation. On the other hand, a man who out of conviction remains the leader of a party makes a heavy personal sacrifice. It is true that, by the favour of fortune, he may enjoy a considerable compensation. When he forms a Government he will exercise real power. He will be supported by a majority of which his own troops form the main fighting strength, and may therefore hope to accomplish some work of noble note. M. Herriot in 1924 was able to reverse the foreign policy of M. Poincaré precisely because he had a partisan following. But such opportunities are comparatively rare. In the legitimate pursuit of office

M. Herriot, once he had made his mark, would probably have found it to his advantage to free himself of his party attachments and set up as a political broker.

In considering the part played by the non-party statesman the first thing to be observed is that his function belongs to Parliamentary politics and not directly to electoral politics. His coming into action is the consequence, not of a general election, but of a Parliamentary crisis. In the normal course no electoral consideration impels the President of the Republic to invite him to form a Ministry. His business is to promote a combination which, in the circumstances of the moment, can command a majority in the Chamber and the Senate. He need not be an electoral figure at all. He may be, like M. Pierre Laval on the occasion of the formation of his first Ministry, a man of high reputation as an administrator, but little known in the country. M. Laval's case is indeed peculiarly illuminating. It was by the purest chance, by the play of Parliamentary politics, that he happened to be in office when it became the Prime Minister's duty to visit Berlin, London and Washington on business of phenomenal importance. Few men in any democratically governed State have directed the national policy on such high occasions with so little claim to represent the organised opinion of the country.

By definition an essentially unattached politician, the non-party statesman need only know the parties as groups in the little world of the Chamber. Nothing more clearly illustrates the character of his function than the fact that he may ostentatiously avow his detachment. Probably the most extreme statement of this personal independence ever made by a Prime Minister-designate

is to be found in a declaration of M. Tardieu on his first attempt to constitute a Ministry in November 1929. After announcing that in forming the Cabinet he would address himself to the members of the two Assemblies who seemed to him most capable of carrying out the policy contemplated, he made a direct allusion to the parties in the following terms: "I shall not enter into dealings, inside or outside Parliament, with organisations of which I do not ignore either the legitimacy or the utility, but which the Constitution does not know. Once the Cabinet is formed the two Assemblies will show what welcome they intend to give it. That is what is required by our laws, by the Republican tradition and by good sense." In a Parliament fully organised it would be inconceivable that the prospective head of a Government should speak so cavalierly of the parties. It was audacious enough in the French Parliament. On this very occasion M. Tardieu invited several Radical-Socialists to join his Cabinet, but as the gentlemen so favoured at once placed themselves in the hands of their leaders the affair was really one of negotiation with the Radical party. It is probable that M. Tardieu was aware of the exaggeration of his claim, for when his Government fell a few months later he appealed energetically to party discipline to prevent the formation of a rival Administration. Non-party statesmen, in fact, always establish relations with the parties. Each has his particular clientèle among the organised groups. The most significant aspect of their function is precisely this specialisation. There have often been political situations which obviously called for M. Briand rather than M. Poincaré; on other occasions M. Poincaré has taken

in hand crises which M. Briand would have been powerless to solve. It is in the highest degree profitable to consider certain non-party statesmen individually, because their action illustrates so clearly the working of Parliamentary machinery.

Throughout his career M. Briand has shared the conviction of old Thiers that "the heart of the Republic is at the Left-Centre." He began as a Socialist. It was as a Socialist that he was appointed Reporter of the Separation Bill, which it was his business to guide through all the stages of debate in the Chamber. This was, as the event proved, his first essay as a political broker. In charge of a measure which provoked violent passions, himself a protagonist, he so acted that he earned, not merely the respect, but the thanks of the Church. Ever afterwards he enjoyed a curious ecclesiastical favour. From this early success the road stretched clear before him. He had peculiar personal qualifications for the career of political broker. As he said of himself, he was "a man of conversation." While he might argue on one side of a question he never forgot that there were two. A love of negotiation, the concentration on what was feasible, left little room in his philosophy for the final resort of battle. Few men who have reached a similar distinction have so successfully avoided the formal expression of political doctrine. Alone among the French statesmen of his day he never wrote a book. If a Celtic flame of ideal burned before him he followed it with many halts and windings and even violent digressions, patient under checks, never expecting too much from his effort. To him life, in Pascal's phrase, was one long *pis-aller*. With such temperamental

gifts he had the appropriate technical equipment for his career. His oratory, at once familiar and elevated, found its natural audience in the Chamber. But his supremacy lay in the distinctive qualities of the Parliamentary : in the appreciation of the movements of opinion, in the just estimation of the influences of circumstance, of party interest and of personal ambition in a given conjuncture. In any crisis which interested him he would take the air in the lobbies, infinitely approachable and *charmeur*, dropping a friendly and useful word here and there, but above all, listening.

In specialising as a statesman of the Left-Centre M. Briand assumed an attitude to which he was inclined alike by his idealism and by his early political associations. In most Chambers he joined the group of the Republican-Socialists, without being under any effective discipline. He imposed, nevertheless, a certain discipline on himself. Even when his authority was at its zenith and his reputation had spread through the world he showed a disinclination to lead any Government which did not conform to the type in which he specialised. In 1929 the imminence of the Hague Conference made it necessary that he should succeed M. Poincaré as head of the Government—M. Briand was then Minister of Foreign Affairs—but when the Ministry was assailed a few months later he pointedly refrained from putting up a fight, and was clearly relieved by his defeat. Neither the Ministry nor the majority supporting it was his own. M. Briand did not want office for the sake of office but for the sake of power. His plan of action was always the same. Sitting patiently at the edge of the advanced parties, cultivating with success the respect of

the Centre, he waited until a situation arose in which a compromise Government inclined to the Left was necessary. He forced nothing. He steadfastly refused to act before the time was ripe, even if pressed to form a Ministry. His opportunity, when it offered, thus seemed to come of itself. An adroit speech delivered at a well-chosen moment would show him that there was a majority in the Chamber ready to his hand. Then he acted with promptitude and shrewdness. His Cabinet would be selected in such a way that while giving the necessary satisfaction to the parties whose support he desired, he retained a well-defined personal authority. He reinforced his own position by introducing into the Ministry a little cohort of friends, devoted to him but owing no other hampering allegiance. The combination was in its essence precarious—none of his eleven Ministries lasted for as much as two years—but it remained true to type. When it fell, the Prime Minister made sure that it should fall mainly by the votes of the Right. He came out of office as he went in, a man of the Left-Centre. It was exactly by such processes that M. Briand became the outstanding personality of the Chamber of 1924. Once the advanced Governments of M. Herriot and M. Painlevé had lost their authority he was the man clearly designated to lead the Government in a Chamber still inclining to the Left. Until the alarm caused by the collapse of the franc had destroyed the discipline of the Radicals he was, indeed, the only man capable of forming a majority.

M. Briand's experience illustrates at once the virtues and the inevitable vices of the system which necessitates the calling in of the professional non-party statesman.

The head of a compromise Government is at one moment the master and at another the servant of the forces he leads. While he commands his policy may well be plain and decisive, but it is less so when differences arise among the members of the coalition. His business of broker does not cease with the successful formation of the Ministry. By the rules of the game, moreover, he is sometimes led into curious adventures. During the crisis of 1926 M. Briand, whose ignorance of figures rivalled the fabled incompetence of Lord Randolph Churchill, spent several days in negotiating with M. Poincaré to form a Government on one monetary policy and then constituted a Ministry with M. Cailaux on a totally different monetary policy. Inconsistencies are inseparable from such a career. A head of a Government is sometimes compelled to pay a high price for the continued support of groups on whom he has no claim as a titular leader. M. Briand, the Liberal, performed the masterful act of calling up railwaymen as military conscripts in order to break the strike of 1910. The author of Locarno was the man who in 1921 threatened to "seize Germany by the coat collar." Even in the characteristic work of his later years M. Briand, lacking the constant support on which a party leader can rely, had to subordinate his foreign policy to the exigencies of associates who did not fully share his views, or even opposed them.

While M. Briand, for all his digressions, has always belonged to one side of politics, M. Poincaré has enjoyed the remarkable distinction of being claimed by both sides during the greater part of his career. In spite of his Conservatism, he has always attempted, and usually with



success, to keep up a certain relationship with the Radicals. Even after the war, even during the occupation of the Ruhr, when M. Poincaré stood out before Europe as the representative of an aggressive and dangerous Nationalism, M. Herriot said of him: "His face is turned towards us." There were, in fact, two very different aspects of M. Poincaré, both quite authentic. His own mind was a battle-ground for the conflicting ideas which divided the Republic. By instinct and by education he was a Conservative. He had the frontier Nationalism of a Lorrainer born ten years ago before the outbreak of the Franco-German war. But he was a Republican of Roman integrity. He would have regarded the reopening of the question of régime as a dire catastrophe, but nobody ever doubted on which side he would be if the Republic had to be defended. The position of M. Poincaré in politics can only be understood by following this double clue. Among the troubled consciences of Republican Conservatives none showed more clearly than his the signs of internal discord. He was a cross-bench mind, but no indifferentist. He was a man of the Centre, but not a neutral; he had keen sympathies and not less lively antipathies on both sides. An unbeliever, he was driven constantly to consort with clericals. A representative of all that was solid and resistant in the established order, he was never easy unless he retained some link with the Radicals, who were social reformers. The fact that M. Poincaré possessed a notable power of will added a further complexity to his case. The career of a man of his calibre, holding his views, must be abnormal. It is impossible to conceive of him as a subordinate content

to be a member of successive Ministerial combinations. He must triumph or stand aloof. During one significant period M. Poincaré did, in fact, stand aloof. The ascendancy of his last phase was not the culmination of a long and uninterrupted progress. After a promising start as Minister he was out of office, except for six months in 1906, during seventeen years. In this long stretch of time, marked by such important acts of government as the settlement of the Dreyfus *affaire* and the passing of the Separation Act, there was no place for a man of the type of M. Poincaré. Not until 1912, when the reaction after Agadir diverted the current of politics, was he able to form his first Ministry. A year later, the same Nationalist movement carried him to the Presidency of the Republic.

Three of M. Poincaré's four effective Governments <sup>1</sup>—and those incomparably the most important—were formed after the war and after his term of office as President of the Republic had expired. It was only in the last years of his career that his rôle as non-party statesman was clearly defined. Clothed with the prestige of an ex-President, he was also favoured by circumstances, which on three occasions enabled him to form Ministries after his own heart. He could not govern from the Left. Whatever preferences his Conservatism and his Nationalism might inspire, he could not too openly depend on the Right. For complete satisfaction he required elements of support from both sides. His ideal was a non-party Government made, so to speak, in the express image of himself. It

<sup>1</sup> M. Poincaré reconstructed his Government on the eve of the election of 1924, but the new Ministry resigned as soon as the election was over.

should contain some sound Republicans from the advanced parties, and still more sound representatives of Conservatism. Of such a Government he could be not merely the head but the master. In his relations with the parties he was thus less of a political broker than an arbiter. In 1922 the Ministry which he constituted to carry out the policy of occupying the Ruhr was a Government of the *bloc national*, but M. Poincaré did not fail to bring into it several dissident Radicals, one of whom he placed at the Ministry of the Interior. At first sight the Chamber of 1924, the product of an election in which the Ruhr policy was condemned, did not appear to offer favourable ground for the operations of the defeated Minister. But M. Poincaré, faithful to his general principle of keeping up relations with all parties, made ostentatious efforts to gain the good graces of the new majority. The Government of National Union, formed in 1926 to save the franc from utter collapse, was his reward. No other French statesman has ever attained such a position of undisputed ascendancy. For the last two years of the Legislature he was the supreme arbiter of the parties; even the opposition of the Socialists was lacking in sting. Such was his command that the election of 1928 was conducted by M. Poincaré almost as if it were a plebiscite in which voters were asked to forget to what parties they belonged and to consecrate his position as Prime Minister. Yet his victory itself showed the inherent weakness of a mere arbiter in politics. The election was scarcely over before M. Poincaré found his position challenged. With the defection of the Radicals he was compelled to fall back on what was, in effect, a *bloc*

*national* Government diluted by the admission into the Cabinet of a number of Republican Socialists.

The truth is that, in spite of its glittering success, the use of the Poincaré formula of government was, and must remain, exceptional. It cannot be part of the regular Parliamentary practice. It asks too much of the parties. Opposites are required to cohabit, however grudgingly. In the long run it is inconsistent with a party system at all. It is an emergency device. Nothing but the necessity of performing some definite task, to which at least the pretext of national interest can be assigned, can compel the union of divergent forces, and then only for the achievement of the particular purpose in view. If M. Poincaré's post-war work be closely examined it will be seen to be confined to two objects which presented, though in different degrees, this character of national emergency. In 1922 he went into power to make the last effort to exact reparations from Germany by force. The occupation of the Ruhr involved the prestige of France almost as much as a foreign war. If the parties could not all unite in supporting the policy it was difficult for any of them to brave the accusation of lack of patriotism by energetically opposing it. In his second great task—that of restoring the currency in 1926—M. Poincaré could plead a national emergency without fear of contradiction from any quarter. In both instances the need for union ceased to be felt when the purpose no longer remained. With the obstinacy which was his conspicuous failing M. Poincaré tried to prolong National Union after the crisis had passed, but from the first meeting of the Chamber of 1928 it became evident that the parties were

uneasy and were not willing to make sacrifices for which there was no longer any apparent occasion. When all is reckoned even the most distinguished non-party statesmen have found it difficult to maintain authority over a coalition of parties, none of which is subject to their official leadership. The experience of M. Poincaré is conclusive in this regard. Beyond the particular objects of the coalition which he commanded the disagreements between the constituent groups prevented him from having any large and positive domestic policy. There were too many questions which he could not touch without provoking discord within his Cabinet. The utmost he could do was to throw a sop first to one side and then to the other. His policy in home affairs was thus either inert or self-contradictory. It was once described by a severe critic as "the policy of a dead dog floating on the stream."

Of the non-party statesmen who act in the more orthodox manner as political brokers none has furnished a more interesting example than M. André Tardieu. The extraordinary ease with which he made his way into the "team of Prime Ministers" showed, as conclusively as anything could, how generally the necessity for the existence of that select company was acknowledged. He was, indeed, far from being unknown. A henchman of Clemenceau, he was a signatory and part-author of the Treaty of Versailles. But up to 1924 his ultra-Nationalism had frightened even the Poincarists, and he lived in the Chamber in a self-imposed isolation. When he returned to Parliament in 1926 he described himself modestly as an independent member belonging to no party, and so remained when he joined

the Ministry of National Union. With a singularly acute sense of opportunity he took full advantage of the confusion of parties in the Chamber of 1928. There was a large Centre, scattered, wanting in motive force and crying out for a leader. By a series of cleverly contrived speeches M. Poincaré's Minister of Public Works virtually announced his candidature. Without direct or formal investiture the main groups of the Centre came to look upon him as their most representative spokesman. They acclaimed him as their man. After the retirement of M. Poincaré and the temporary resort to a Briand Premiership, M. Tardieu's claim to the succession, however much it might surprise the world at large, was admitted with visible satisfaction by the majority of the Chamber. With no troops at his orders, in the strict sense representing nothing, he was called in by the President of the Republic as the likeliest man to form a majority. M. Tardieu began his practice as political broker in a sporting spirit which brought upon him the accusation of levity. On November 1, 1929, he tried to form a Government leaning on the Left, with six or seven Radicals in the Cabinet. This project having failed, he constituted within twenty-four hours a Ministry chiefly based on the Centre, but necessarily inclining to the Right, with the Radicals in opposition. Such adaptability in a statesman argues, if not the absence of conviction, at any rate an easy grasp of principle. In this early essay M. Tardieu accomplished another *tour de force*. He ruled with the Right and began with a policy of the Left. If his supporters complained of his policy he replied: "But your friends are in office." If the Radicals reproached him with the reactionary

composition of his Ministry he retorted triumphantly: "But it is your policy which I am carrying out. I bring you your own children in my arms." It is true that, having borrowed his measures he fought for them with the *amour propre* which is often so admirable a substitute for conviction. It might almost have seemed that he was out, of set purpose, to break through the nice conventions, the sham scruples which so frequently preside at the birth of party coalitions. But such achievements of Disraelian sportiveness cannot be repeated indefinitely. In spite of the show of independence and the exercise of the most skilful opportunism, a political broker tends to become the prisoner of his majority. Once having accepted a particular clientèle among the parties he is driven to specialise. In the Parliament of 1928 M. Tardieu became, willy-nilly, virtually a statesman of the Centre-Right.

Examples so characteristic and so diverse illustrate sufficiently the methods by which the non-party statesman performs his function. But no general view could be complete which did not take account of the great influence of personal prestige in his career. Behind the function is the man. An outstanding personality, in the course of a long experience, acquires an authority which is his own and which he brings with him into every Government, however constituted. A Poincaré and a Briand come to stand for definite things in politics, for general aims of policy to which their reputation is tied, and the abandonment of which would be an act of apostasy. Any majority which called on M. Briand to lead it as Prime Minister knew what to expect of him in foreign policy. In the revival of public confidence

during the monetary crisis of 1926 M. Poincaré's prestige was at least as important a factor as the party truce which ended the paralysing conflicts in the Chamber. The non-party statesman, in both these distinguished cases, was much more than a Parliamentary figure; he was a national figure. To the observer of the working of the political system it is, nevertheless, of interest to remark that these men reached the highest peak of success, not by a long career of direct appeal to the country, but by an apprenticeship which was in its early stages almost confined to the little world of Parliament. The party leader travels about the country to preach his doctrine, to inspire his followers, to recruit new adherents. The non-party statesman has no such necessary and constant concern with the electorate. Even when his power and prestige have reached their height he is still, first of all, an old Parliamentary hand. M. Briand rarely addressed a public meeting. He visited his constituency on the eve of every general election, always beginning his campaign with an apology for not having appeared there since the previous election. Even M. Poincaré, in the days of his ascendancy, made his Sunday speeches almost exclusively in Lorraine. As President of the Republic he was necessarily conspicuous, but even so there were many parts of the South where he had never made an appearance in public.

The successful careers of such men mark a vital difference between the political systems which are almost entirely worked by organised parties and those in which the parties are unable, by themselves, regularly and inevitably to provide Governments. In one aspect, this incapacity of the organised forces of opinion may



seem a discredit to the French system. On the other hand, it would be unjust not to recognise the fact that French suppleness has found a remedy for this defect which, if it involved the growth of certain anomalies, at its best has created a class of statesmen which includes some of the most famous men in modern Europe.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY

No political system can evade the problem of authority. It must be a principal aim of any Constitution, even of the most democratic, to produce Governments which shall govern, which shall possess real initiative and command. The sovereignty which is delegated by the nation to Parliament must discipline itself to obey, within certain limits, the Ministry which is its creature. The authors of the Constitution of 1875 clearly recognised this necessity. They expressly endowed Ministers, as representing the President, with a full share of initiative in legislation. They protected the Executive against abusive invasions of its rights by giving it the power, under certain conditions, to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies. In practice the Executive has never enjoyed the full benefit of these two provisions. The right of the Government to initiative in legislation has too often been made ineffective by the Chamber's exercise of its right of amendment. As for the power of dissolution, that supreme resource of the Executive fell into fatal disrepute two years after the Constitution was founded and has never since been used.

In this matter, once more, the Constitution-makers of 1875 were fascinated by the spectacle of the British Parliament, which normally produced stable and authoritative Governments. Their hope, it may be assumed,

was that Governments in France would be supported by majorities which, if not observing the discipline of a single party, would at least be bound by affinities of doctrine and ties of interest furnishing a good substitute for discipline. Such majorities have been formed in the Chamber of Deputies more often than is commonly supposed. But not the most devout admirer of the Parliamentary system can survey without quaking the lamentable record of Government-making during the lifetime of the Third Republic. There have been more than sixty Ministries in half a century. It is true that this figure is misleading. A considerable number of changes of Government have been slight reconstructions, like the passage from the Sarrien Government to that of Clemenceau in 1906, or from the Monis Government to that of M. Caillaux in 1911. Others have been ineffectual attempts, promptly abandoned, to establish a new majority in the Chamber, with no more effective result than that an ephemeral Government interrupted for a few days the reign of some Ministry, as the Chaumets Government of 1930 was interposed between two Premierships of M. Tardieu. Such crises are of little consequence, mere incidents which scarcely disturb the course of events. But there have been periods, like that of the monetary crisis of 1926, when the whole process of Ministry-making has seemed to be conducted with singular levity. A Deputy will be called to the telephone in Havre or Bordeaux and will accept a Ministerial post, only to find on his arrival in Paris that the Cabinet is of such a kind that he cannot possibly join it. A harassed Prime Minister-designate will negotiate feverishly through the night, sending round

messengers to fetch from their beds members or Parliament who had not the slightest notion that they might be asked to accept office. On one occasion a score of Ministers went home at midnight in the proud assurance that they were members of a Government definitely constituted, but discovered from the papers next morning that the combination had failed at the last moment and that they were still private members. There could be no surer mark of instability than such improvisations. It should be said, however, that the French Parliamentary system has found means to counteract some of the effects of these plunges into disorder. In order to ensure continuity of policy, especially in regard to foreign affairs and national defence, the same Minister has remained at the head of his department for several years, undisturbed by repeated changes of Government. The outstanding examples of this continuity are the long periods during which Delcassé and, later, M. Briand remained at the *Quai d'Orsay*. In spite of such palliatives, however, Governmental instability is a grave defect of the working Parliamentary system.

If a wide stretch of experience be reviewed it will be found that the power of the Executive, necessarily affected by these disorders, has varied very greatly from one Legislature to another. It has sometimes been high enough to arouse protests against its alleged tyranny. At other times it has fallen so low that the Chamber of Deputies has seemed to have arrogated to itself the whole authority of Government. The explanation of these variations is not far to seek. In any system of representative government the Executive

possesses, as an inalienable minimum of authority, the power of its function, defined and protected by the Constitution. But it is obvious that the extent of this authority in practice depends on the existence and regular employment of the Parliamentary machinery which its maintenance requires. A Ministry exercises its power over the Chamber of Deputies, not directly, but through the majority to which it looks for support. If a Government has a confident and continuous command of its majority it can be firm in its handling of the Chamber. It can be a Government which governs. If, on the contrary, it has only a loose hold over its majority it is less able to impose respect for the proper attributes of the Executive. It is the variation in the efficiency of this machinery which accounts for the fluctuation of executive authority. Everything depends on the majority, on its composition, on its cohesion, on the degree of confidence in the Ministry which it possesses. In France, where all majorities are coalitions, this means that everything depends on the nature of the coalition. The Executive is strongest when the Government is the trusted agent of a coalition of natural allies, or when it is led by a non-party statesman of dominating personality.

At no time has Governmental initiative been more marked than it was under the Ministries of Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes. Both these statesmen really ruled. They carried highly controversial measures against a determined Opposition. In difficult situations they made known the view of the Government and staked their official existence on it. Chamber and Senate alike were aware of an active organ of govern-

ment asserting itself to the limit of its Constitutional power. In more recent times M. Herriot's Ministry of 1924 wielded a similar authority. During its short term of office it gave repeated evidence of purpose and decision. It reversed the whole trend of foreign policy. It passed through the Chamber a Budget containing drastic reforms. We are not concerned here with the wisdom of the policy of any of these Administrations, but simply with their notable exercise of the authority of the Executive. As to the origin of their power there is no doubt. All of them were brought into office by coalitions which possessed sufficient unity on sufficiently important points of policy. The coalitions themselves were in effect the result of the decision of the country on certain prominent issues. Anti-clericalism knit together the groups which supported Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes. The revolt against a Nationalism which had been aggressive abroad and neglectful of needed reforms at home united Radicals and Socialists behind M. Herriot. Each of these Ministers was, therefore, the agent or representative of a powerful and relatively stable coalition. The coalition, in its turn, became the instrument by which the Government exerted its authority over the Chamber. Combes more than once stated in set terms the principle of co-operation between Government and majority. "The Governmental method which I practise," he said on one occasion, "supposes an understanding in advance between the Government which proposes and the groups which accept. It supposes a community of views which makes it a question of little consequence whether the idea comes from the majority or from the Government." Such

an arrangement, though criticised as making the Ministry a mere agent, provides the natural and by far the most effective means by which the Executive can use with energy and confidence its Constitutional right of initiative. All these Ministries, it will be observed, were Governments of the Left. The general bias of French politics has made it inevitable that the essential combination of a strong Government and a purposeful coalition should be more often produced on the Left than on the Right. A Ministry supported by a *bloc national* coalition, of which there have been several examples in the last twelve years, has sometimes enjoyed the same kind of authority in Parliament, though rarely in the same degree, and then only by virtue of the leadership of a Prime Minister of exceptional personality. Social Conservatism and Nationalism doubtless provide a sufficient common ground of policy for such a combination, but a *bloc national* majority always has an unreliable Left wing composed of Moderates who are afraid of being confounded with the doubtful Republicans of the extreme Right.

So much for the exercise of executive authority in comparatively favourable conditions. But such experience does not establish a general rule. It is necessary to take account of the numerous compromise Ministries which are found to be inevitable in so many Legislatures. Of these Governments a certain proportion are purely *ministères de passage*, the offspring of loose and opportunist coalitions which have only a remote relation with politics in the country, but which have been formed to meet the needs of the immediate Parliamentary situation. Usually they are constituted under a neutral Prime Minister.

It is inconceivable that Governments so formed should enjoy the complete and unfailing trust of their majorities. A party will submit to the command, and even to the bullying, of its own permanent leaders, but it will not readily yield the same obedience to a non-party statesman who is as much a referee as the captain of a team. In asserting itself before Parliament, therefore, such a Ministry suffers from the grave defect that the instrument by which it enforces its authority—that is to say, its majority—may break in its hands. Experience has shown that while the authority of the Executive, as wielded by a Ministry of compromise, varies between wide limits, it hardly ever escapes entirely the consequences of this defect. It stands high when it borrows the personal prestige of a Poincaré or a Briand ; it falls with the accession to office of less eminent promoters of Ministries. It gains an adventitious strength at a time of crisis, when the defeat of the Government would have very serious effects ; it weakens with the disappearance of the emergency which has kept the groups of the Governmental majority together. The capital test of the authority of the Executive in Parliament is the power of the Government of the day to carry its majority with it by making a vote on a critical question one of confidence in the Ministry. This procedure is exactly equivalent to the British practice of “putting on the Whips” ; a Government defeat would necessarily be followed by resignation. If this test be applied the limitations of Ministries of compromise become apparent. Even the most distinguished of non-party statesmen have often displayed a singular prudence in their use of the vote of confidence. At the height of the monetary crisis,



when an alternative Government was out of the question, M. Poincaré refrained from any attempt to dragoon his majority into voting for his proposal to farm out the State match monopoly, on which he was in fact defeated. Lesser statesmen, the heads of Governments for which alternatives could only too readily be found, have frequently descended to the most flagrant opportunism, putting on or leaving off the Whips as circumstances required, without any evident concern for Governmental authority but with the supreme preoccupation of keeping a majority. M. Tardieu, whose two Ministries of 1929 and 1930 were supported by practically the same groups, gave a remarkable demonstration of versatility of tactics. During his first Ministry the temper of the groups was such that he could best obtain obedience by demanding votes of confidence, and he insisted on them with impressive frequency. But his second Ministry was so much more precarious that he pursued precisely the opposite course and, in many dangerous divisions, left Deputies to vote as they pleased. Ministers were thus compelled to accept measures to which they were opposed, and against which they had themselves voted, but they remained in office. It is clearly not from Governments of compromise—of which those of M. Tardieu were by no means the weakest examples—that a strong programme of legislation, challenging and firmly pressed, can be expected. Such Governments in effect abandon to the Chamber a portion of the executive authority which has been claimed and exercised by more partisan Ministries with more faithful and coherent majorities.

In presence of these variations it may fairly be said

that there is no established standard of executive authority implicitly and at all times accepted by Parliament. Everybody concedes the right of Governmental initiative in theory. In practice the Executive has as much power as the Government of the day can win for it, and no more. If the electoral origin of the successive Chambers of Deputies of the Third Republic were examined in detail it would be found that majorities have been most reliable and Governmental authority most marked in the Chambers elected on a clear issue, and therefore with a definite mandate. Perhaps the comparative failure of the French Parliamentary system to set up a high standard of executive authority may indeed be attributed in the long run mainly to the lack of electoral mandate from which so many Ministries suffer. On the whole, taking good Ministries with bad, the Chamber possesses, as against the Executive, a marked advantage gained in the ordinary practice of the Parliamentary system. It has indeed pressed that advantage. It has reinforced its superiority by inventing certain machinery which, if not unconstitutional, is not mentioned in the Organic Laws and was certainly never contemplated by the National Assembly of 1875. The Chamber Committees, nominally formed for the harmless purpose of giving detailed examination to legislative measures, have been so used as radically to diminish Governmental initiative in legislation.

An article of the Constitutional Laws provides that the President of the Republic shall have the initiative in legislation "concurrently with the members of the two Chambers." Juridically, this means that the introduction of Government Bills is a Presidential act, and in practice

all such Bills bear the name of the President on the back, along with those of Ministers. Private members' Bills, though equally Constitutional, lack this official endorsement. The distinction between the two classes of measures is marked by a difference of appellation. A Government Bill is a *projet de loi*. A private member's Bill is a *proposition de loi*. In the press of business of a modern Parliament the Government demands, more and more urgently as time goes on, that the discussion of its own Bills shall occupy by far the greater part of Parliamentary time. This request is granted by the Chamber with hardly any question. Government measures occupy almost the whole agenda of every Session. Enjoying this quasi-monopoly, profiting by the official prestige of its Bills and employing the weapon of the closure, a Government would thus seem to be amply endowed with power to carry its measures through Parliament. This initial advantage is, however, remarkably curtailed by the machinery of Parliamentary control which has been set up and perfected during the last thirty years. In its earliest form the control was extremely moderate and, in a sense, casual. By a long-established procedure every Bill, after being introduced and read out by the President of the Chamber, was formally referred to a committee. Originally, such a committee was *ad hoc*, elected to consider the particular Bill and report to the Chamber. About the beginning of this century, however, the Chamber adopted the practice of electing permanent committees, each of which was competent to deal with a specified group of subjects of legislation. By 1909 there were nine such bodies. Simple logical extension carried the system to the point

at which there were practically as many committees as there were Ministerial departments. In 1920 a regulation fixed the number at twenty, which covered among them the whole field of legislative activity. Each committee consists of forty-four members, the various groups of the Chamber being represented in proportion to their numerical strength. The Senate has faithfully copied the arrangement. Purely from the point of view of the efficient discussion of legislation there is no denying the advantage of the system. It is in committee that Bills receive the most detailed and informed consideration. The written expositions presented by the *rapporteurs* are not infrequently documents of the highest interest. It would hardly be too much to say that half the real work of the Chamber and Senate is done by their committees. As compared with an *ad hoc* committee the more permanent body has, moreover, an obvious superiority in that it ensures that its members shall have time to become thoroughly acquainted with the class of questions which comes before them.

But with the erection of this permanent and comprehensive system the committees have suffered a fundamental change in character and function. From being simple organs of criticism and suggestion they have gradually become engines of control over the whole action of the Government. Originally confined to legislation, their province has been extended to include every branch of administration. The Foreign Affairs Committee, the Army Committee and the Naval Committee expect and receive frequent statements on current policy from the Ministers concerned. But it is in legislation that the committees exercise their main

control over Government initiative. Every Bill, immediately and automatically referred to the appropriate committee on the day of its introduction, is subjected to the most thorough examination in detail. The committee is under no obligation to respect even the general purpose of the measure. It can, and often does, insert the most material amendments. To all intents and purposes these amendments, at the end of this stage, stand as part of the Bill. When the measure appears for its first public discussion in the Chamber it is, in effect, the committee's Bill. If the Government objects to the alterations, the onus is on the Minister in charge to persuade the Chamber to restore the original provisions. It is quite common for the Government's case to be opposed to the committee's case in debate, with the Chamber sitting as a sort of court of appeal.

It is sometimes said by critics of this procedure that it has positively displaced the axis of the system of government, that it is the Chamber which rules and not the Government. This is an exaggeration; a Ministry can always overrule the committees if it is sufficiently determined and as long as it has a majority. It is none the less evident that the system facilitates encroachment by Parliament on a province properly belonging to the Government. It puts in jeopardy the venerable and well-grounded principle of the separation of the executive and legislative powers. On one side is the Executive with its Ministers and their respective departments. On the other side is the Legislature with its committees, one at least for every Minister. Government initiative is confronted by committee initiative. The parallelism is ominous. For control over the

Executive, whether legitimate or illegitimate, the Legislature is well armed at all points. In the best conditions there need not indeed be intolerable friction between the two powers. Committees often deal with Ministers on a footing of friendly, if critical, co-operation. But there is a distinct risk of vexatious interference with the reasonable freedom of action of the governing authority. M. Poincaré, who viewed the development of the committee system with misgiving, pointed out that, with two Chambers and two sets of committees, a Minister in charge of even the most insignificant of Bills is compelled to give the same explanation of the measure at least four times. But this is a minor inconvenience. The system must be judged in accordance with the manner in which the committees use or abuse their powers of control.

By far the most important of these bodies is the Finance Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, which furnishes many examples both of the proper use and of the abuse of control. The Budget is not merely the most necessary work of the year but sometimes, in the disorder of legislation, the only serious work accomplished. Of the five months of the ordinary Parliamentary Session it occupies three or more. If the composition of the committee and the nature of its task be considered, it is at once obvious that its members will not confine their activities to the technical discussion of taxation and expenditure. It would be difficult to conceive a more admirable field for the manœuvring of parties. There is no province in which Government policy is so vulnerable as the Budget. The procedure adopted in the framing and discussion of estimates, moreover, is

distinctly calculated to enhance the importance of the committee. All estimates of revenue and expenditure prepared by Ministers and their departments are sent directly to the committee some weeks before the opening of the Session in which they will be publicly discussed. They are scrutinised Vote by Vote, criticised, amended in numerous details. The action of the committee is of such consequence that its communiques are frequently given considerable prominence in the newspapers. In such circumstances the attitude of the committee towards the Government of the day may be a matter of the highest concern. A well-disposed committee can help the Government in defending its proposals before the Chamber. A hostile committee can hamper the action of Ministers by introducing serious modifications into the Budget or by preparing ingenious pitfalls which it will be hard to avoid in public debate. In practice the Finance Committee of the Chamber, while performing with diligence its function of technical criticism, is far from disdaining to use its political power. Its action in certain exceptional and critical periods shows the committee system at its best and at its worst.

During the Legislature of 1924-28, which passed the whole of its existence under the shadow of a monetary crisis, the Finance Committee arrogated to itself so much power that it became almost a regular organ of government. The steps by which it reached this position of exorbitant authority throw so much light on the working relations between Executive and Legislature that they deserve examination in some detail. Formed immediately after the general election, the committee reflected faithfully the party composition of the Chamber itself.

It was therefore dominated by a majority of the Cartel des Gauches, of which the Radicals and Socialists constituted the principal elements. In the first phase of the Legislature the Herriot Ministry necessarily enjoyed the support of a stable majority in the Chamber and a strictly corresponding majority in the Finance Committee. In consequence, the committee performed efficiently and with comparative modesty its task of supervision and suggestion. It was an organ of the Chamber but friendly to the Government. In the following spring the Government fell. The governing coalition in the Chamber began to disintegrate. A regrouping of political forces occurred. But the Finance Committee did not at once follow this movement. Like all bodies to which important functions are attributed it had developed a corporate sense. The Chamber groups, moreover, for the most part continued to be represented on the committee by the same delegates, many of whom had a recognised technical competence in finance. Even the Independent Radicals, who had virtually broken away from the Cartel, maintained their Cartellist representatives in office. While the effective majority in the Chamber was coming to depend less and less on the advanced parties and more on the Moderates, the committee retained its old formation, with a Radical as President and an impenitent Cartellist as Reporter. The relations between Government and committee underwent a radical change. Successive Ministers of Finance found in the committee no longer an ally but an independent critic and a potential enemy. It is no overstatement to say that at certain times the Finance Committee exercised more real power than either the



Government or the Chamber. A Minister with some fresh proposal for raising revenue had to spend days in wrangling with this arbitrary body of censors. One Minister was forced by the committee to resign before he had even had an opportunity of submitting his case to the Chamber. It was not until a party truce made possible the formation of M. Poincaré's Government that the committee retreated to its proper province of criticism and control.

Such an assumption of exorbitant powers shows the danger of creating organs unknown to the Constitution and therefore uncontrolled by any authority more august than the regulations of the Chamber. But in spite of the proved liability to abuse of powers the committee system presents so many advantages in the despatch of Parliamentary business that it has good claims to stand as part of the regular machinery of the Legislature. It represents, in reality, a more serious method of day-to-day control of policy than the classic device of interpellation. The interpellation of Ministers is indeed a procedure of considerable importance and is much more regular in the French Parliament than is the vote of censure in the House of Commons. It furnishes a convenient means of debating the general policy, or a particular act, of the Government, and the vote on the *ordre du jour* with which it ends is a test of Ministerial strength. On crucial occasions, when a majority is wavering, the vote decides the fate of the Government. But an interpellation has not always this high significance. Sometimes it rather serves the purpose, useful but less important, of enabling all the parties, as well as Ministers, to ventilate their opinions,

and often drags on like a serial story from Friday to Friday without tangible result.

On a general view it will be apparent that the French Parliamentary system has departed, in fact if not in theory, from the British system on which it was modelled. In the instinctive but unavowed conflict between Executive and Legislature, which is characteristic of all Parliamentary institutions, the Chamber of Deputies has gained ground at the expense of the Government. On balance the Chamber keeps in its own hands a larger share of power than does the House of Commons. In reality, however, the sharing out of power between Executive and Legislature is less rigid in the French system than in the British. This is necessarily so, as anyone may see by considering the effect of all the factors concerned in producing the special characteristics of the French system. There is a large number of parties, none of which ever obtains an absolute majority over all the others, so that every Government is a coalition. There is always a residuum of independent members. There is a Chamber which, in the absence of any real power to dissolve it, has a fixed term of life and is therefore compelled to solve frequent crises without appeal to the electorate; this necessitates the formation of Ministries based on compromise coalitions. There is a "team" of Prime Ministers, non-party politicians whose standing ranges from that of arbiters of the highest prestige to that of opportunists who act as brokers between the parties. If all these elements be fairly considered it will be seen that they conspire to produce a working relationship between Government and Chamber necessarily more supple than that which

normally exists between a British Government and the House of Commons. But there is something more. This elastic relationship is not merely the mechanical result of political conditions. It is in harmony with the profound French conception of what Parliamentary government should be. Through the whole conduct of public affairs there runs an implication that the Chamber of Deputies should be a truly deliberative assembly. The Frenchman is an incorrigible individualist. Everybody in politics recognises the need for a more perfect organisation of parties, but there remains an equally general, instinctive objection to cut-and-dried decisions coldly imposed on Parliament by party machines. It may be assumed that, however reorganised, the Chamber will always be so constituted as to leave a certain elasticity in grouping. There will always be occasions when speeches will influence votes.

For the French Parliament the problem of authority therefore resolves itself into a problem of reconciling the demand of the Government for power to act and the demand of the Chamber for ultimate freedom of judgment. In concrete terms the problem is that of organising parties sufficiently to assure the Government of the day of a reliable majority, while avoiding the rigidity of a permanent Governmental coalition faced by a permanent Opposition. A rigid arrangement is, in fact, impossible, since there are so many parties and so many possible coalitions, and the difficulty is rather to set up a means of knitting together for any considerable time the groups which form the Governmental majority or the Opposition. One method has been practised in

numerous Legislatures, and not without success. It is that of founding an "inter-group," whose organ is a committee of delegates drawn from all the groups allied in support of the Government or in opposition to it. The venerable origin of this solution is doubtless the *réunion des gauches* which was so powerful an instrument in the hands of Gambetta. The *bloc des gauches* supporting Combes carried the system to a point of much greater elaboration, and the Prime Minister frequently consulted the delegation of the groups on points of policy. In effect, the system takes advantage of the division of the Chamber, always existing but rarely decisive, into Right and Left. It is only feasible and durable when there is a real community of interest and opinion between the participants. The method is capable of extension, but in present conditions it can hardly become a regular and powerful piece of Parliamentary machinery. The Chamber, so often left without strong party guidance, will continue to improvise, out of its imperfectly organised groups, Ministries which it can overturn as easily as it sets them up.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE POWER OF THE SENATE

By prescribing a special method of election for the members of the Senate, by giving them a mandate of nine years and by stipulating that they must have attained the respectable age of forty, the authors of the Constitution showed their anxiety to differentiate the Upper from the Lower Chamber as decisively as possible. Even in presence of these guarantees, however, there were critics who predicted that the Senate, being ultimately dependent on popular suffrage, would be captured by the party organisations which engineered the election of the Chamber of Deputies and would have little distinct character of its own. These prophets were wrong. By the action of an inscrutable law which governs all constituted communities the Senate has acquired a marked corporate sense, with all the accompaniments of slowly formed traditions, unwritten rules of conduct and a scrupulous care for the privileges of the assembly.

To pass from the Chamber of Deputies to the palace of Marie de Medicis is to breathe a different air. After the turbulent forum the polite discussion of the drawing-room. A certain aristocratic sedateness is *de mise*. To gain the ear of the Senate an orator must cultivate a reserve of language which is the nearest French equivalent of the "House of Lords manner." The *pères*

*conscripts* have as much objection as had Queen Victoria to being addressed as if they were a public meeting. A speech shouted over their heads to the readers of popular newspapers shocks their dignity. Many an eloquent Minister accustomed to the rude jousts of the Chamber, with their merciless cut-and-thrust, their resounding appeals to public opinion, has failed to win the sympathy of the Senate. Among its own members the Senate insists on a respect for seniority and rank which seems almost incongruous in an assembly of Republican France. A new member, whatever his quality, is expected not to be too forward. M. Herriot, whose insatiable thirst for experience carried him to the Upper Chamber for a brief space, has given an amusing account of the apprenticeship through which he was required to pass.<sup>1</sup> In all the proceedings of the Senate, whether in public debate or in the handling of business in committee, there is an impressive show of ponderation, as if intentionally to mark a contrast with the spirit of plunging decision so often manifested in another place. The most pressing Ministerial requests for rapid decisions are not infrequently declined with ostentation.

In respect of its composition and organisation the Senate has abundantly satisfied the desires of the Constitution-makers for the erection of a barrier between the

<sup>1</sup> In a warning note to a newly elected Senator, M. Herriot wrote: "In the first year you do not enter the debating Chamber, but in the lobbies you salute the Senators, giving them their title. The second year you take a place in a corner of the debating Chamber. The third year you risk once or twice a 'Très bien.' The fourth year you ask to be made a member of a small committee. The fifth year you ask to be charged with a report on a local by-road; in the sixth year this request is granted. The seventh year you risk one speech at the tribune. The eighth year you speak twice. In the ninth year you are beaten at the polls."

Upper and the Lower Chamber. The Senate, like the Chamber, has a party system of its own. If the groups of the Chamber are not mere replicas of the parties in the country, it is equally true that the Senate groups do not correspond precisely either to the electoral organisations or to the Chamber groups. The parties influence the formation of groups, but they do not dictate it. Only one party, the Socialist, has its own distinct and disciplined groups in both Houses. We are thus far from the elaborate organisation which in some countries imposes a common pattern on the party system in the country and in the two Parliamentary assemblies. There are, of course, affinities. The group known as the Republican Union has a close relationship with the Republican Democratic Union in the Chamber and shares its right to be regarded as the true representative of Conservatism. The Democratic Left, which alone constitutes almost half the assembly, has associations with the Radical-Socialist party and can, on occasion, be strongly influenced by it. But not more than two-thirds of its members belong to the party, and the group can by no means be relied upon to accept instructions from the party leaders.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the Senate recruits

<sup>1</sup> In 1928 the Senate divided itself up into the following groups (the number of members of each group is given in brackets).

Right (9).

Republican Left (22).

Republican Union (77).

Democratic and Radical Union (32).

Democratic Left (mainly Radical-Socialist) (150).

Socialist (15).

No group (8).

The order of the groups is broadly that of the shades of the political spectrum. The Right includes the pure reactionaries and Monarchists. The Republican

its members from the same *milieu* of departmental and municipal councillors which furnish the greater number of Deputies, and this circumstance produces a certain similarity of *personnel*. Even so, a curious differentiation has been maintained. The local councils practically constitute the colleges which elect Senators, with the result that a general councillor of a department, being already in the *ambiance* of the electoral college, has an excellent chance of being chosen. He is, on the average, a better candidate for a Senatorial election than is a member of the Chamber of Deputies. Naturally the parties have done their best to capture the local councils, but they have not succeeded in ensuring, as an absolute rule, that the elections shall be conducted on strict party lines. And, however they are elected, Senators have a way of escaping from the implied obligations of their origin. The subtle influences of the environment of the Luxembourg have been even more powerful than the Constitution-makers can have hoped. Ardent politicians who pass into the Senate suffer a change in temper and outlook comparable with the gradual taming of a Liberal Peer. These conditions, taken together, give the Upper House an independence which is far from being negligible.

The Senate was so obviously designed to be permanently overshadowed by the Chamber that many Constitutionalists have treated it as having scarcely any importance at all. During the first twenty years of the Republic the Senate itself seemed content to accept, not

Left is composed almost entirely of representatives of the Catholic West and East. Social Conservatism is represented by the Republican Union. The Democratic and Radical Union is constituted by Moderates with some Leftward sympathies. The Democratic Left includes, besides the orthodox Radical-Socialists, a miscellany of "progressives."



merely inferiority, but practical effacement. It looked on, totally ineffective if not indifferent, at the birth and death of the Governments which sprang in such profusion from the prolific caprice of the Chamber. Ferry, defeated in the Senate on a vital clause of an Education Bill, never thought of resigning and nobody thought of asking him to do so. In 1894 Jules Simon complained bitterly that no protest was raised when a Minister flatly told the members of the Senate during a public sitting that, if they defeated him, it was not only his right but his duty to remain in office. The doctrine of Constitutional impotence could not have been more crudely stated or more markedly admitted. Mr. Bodley, in the early 'nineties, was constrained to note the "insignificance" of the Senate. But with the growth of a corporate spirit and a sense of independence a notable change occurred. Towards the end of the century the Senate showed a new disposition to assert itself, to take its stand on a different interpretation of its Constitutional rights, and even to exaggerate its privileges. In 1896, for the first time, it compelled a Ministry to resign. On several occasions since it has used the same power, and with impunity. It has claimed—and every year acts upon its claim—the power to increase the amount of Budget Votes passed by the Chamber. It has thus raised two important Constitutional questions. It has laid down the principle that Ministries are equally responsible to the Senate and the Chamber. It has challenged, in a certain measure, the alleged right of the Chamber to a monopoly of initiative in financial legislation. On both points the position of the Senate is disputed, and the conflict is undecided in the sense

that no rule has been established which is accepted by both parties.

The quarrel concerning finance, though it recurs annually, is the less serious of the two. It usually takes the form of alternate rejection and reinsertion of Budget provisions in the course of the famous *navette* on the last day of the financial year, when the measure is tossed from Senate to Chamber and from Chamber to Senate, each assembly insisting on its clause or its amendment. Throughout this game of shuttlecock the doctrinal dispute is implied rather than expressed. The Chamber objects to amendments as a tacit denial of the right of the Senate to insert them. A compromise invariably puts an end to the struggle without settling the question of principle. The dispute is not negligible and has even an indirect bearing on the question of the authority of Governments in their relations with the Legislature. Sometimes, for example, the Senate restores to the Budget credits which were originally proposed by the Government but were rejected by the Chamber. According to the view generally favoured by the Chamber such action by the Upper Assembly is unconstitutional; the Senate may reduce credits, but it has no authority to introduce new ones, since laws of finance must in the first instance be presented to the Chamber, *and voted by the Chamber*. The Senate, on the other hand, reads this clause of the Constitution as meaning simply that the Budget, as a Budget, must first be voted by the Chamber, but that the measure, as introduced by the Government, is addressed to the Senate as well as to the Chamber; the Upper House has therefore the right to restore provisions which

appeared in the original Bill. It is evident that by acting in this manner the Senate is often not merely asserting a prerogative, but is helping the Government as against the Chamber. The political consequences of its decisions are in some cases important. A Government doubtful of its majority not infrequently submits in the Chamber to an amendment which it regards as undesirable, because it counts on the Senate to restore the original clause.

In the matter of the direct responsibility of Ministers the Senate, while it has turned out Governments only on four occasions, has shown a tendency to accentuate, rather than to moderate, its claim. The Bourgeois Ministry of 1896 was defeated on a vote of censure, but was only forced out of office after a struggle, and under protest. In 1913 M. Briand, in face of an adverse vote on a Proportional Representation Bill, retired of his own free will, without acknowledging any obligation to do so. But two cases which have occurred since the war have given the action of the Senate a more serious significance. M. Herriot was dismissed on a direct vote of censure in March 1925, less than a year after his striking victory at the polls. In spite of the fact that he still possessed a majority in the Chamber, he bowed to the decision. The Tardieu Government of 1930 also retired after a vote of censure. On this occasion M. Tardieu publicly announced before the division was taken that the Government regarded itself as equally responsible to the two Chambers. He appears to have been the first Prime Minister to have accepted, while in office, the Senate's view of its Constitutional powers. His declaration had, of course, no legal effect as an

authoritative interpretation of the Constitution. The question remains open. Here, however, within the space of five years, were two Governments, both of them strong and combative, driven out of office by the Second Chamber. The fact that the fatal blow was delivered by a vote of censure increases its significance. The Senate openly declared its hostility, not to some Government measure, but to the Government itself. Even in a written Constitution, wherever texts are doubtful, powers come to be defined by custom. In this important dispute four precedents have been created, and the later precedents have greater force than the earlier ones.

This development is all the more remarkable as the Senate for so long existed, so to speak, on sufferance. It was regarded by the more advanced Republicans of the National Assembly of 1875 as a necessary evil, as one of the disagreeable features of a compromise. A demand for its abolition was immediately inscribed, and long remained, in the Radical programme. It forms part of the Socialist programme to-day. If the Senate survived its initial unpopularity it was for several good reasons. To begin with, as has been pointed out, it behaved with a disarming prudence. Its majestic inertia allayed the fear that it might become a citadel of reaction. But it has repeatedly been spared by its adversaries from another and deeper motive. During the Boulangist agitation the Radicals realised that a continuance of their attack in the circumstances of the crisis would open the road to a dictatorship. The Senate was saved with the régime. In 1919, again, the Radical-Socialist Congress resolved that "an immediate revision

of the Constitution at this moment could only have the effect of provoking, without necessity, a dangerous crisis." By that time, however, the Radicals had abandoned their demand for complete suppression of the Senate and only asked for a democratic reform of its mode of election. It may be assumed that when M. Herriot, a Radical Prime Minister, retired from office in 1925, thus tacitly submitting to the censure of the Senate, he did so from motives similar to those which inspired the Radical resolution of 1919. He did not admit the Senate's right to overturn the Government, but he thought that a revolt against the decision, even if he carried with him his majority in the Chamber, would raise a violent Constitutional controversy at a time when the country was menaced by a grave monetary crisis. Considerations of pure expediency, no doubt, also influenced his judgment. The French electorate, like the British, refuses to be stirred to passion on a Constitutional question unless it is linked with some burning immediate issue. It was not until the House of Lords threw out the Budget of 1909 that the country moved resolutely against it. The occasion would have to be one of some moment when a French party would find it advantageous to press its quarrel with the Senate to a conclusion. The Senate does not enjoy either positive popularity or profound respect, but it has entrenched itself in the Parliamentary system.

Nor is the Senate at all likely to tempt fate by a flagrant abuse of its position. Its power is not dynamic ; it is the power of a brake and not of an engine. Whatever its theoretical claim may be, the responsibility of Ministers to the Senate is immeasurably less than their

responsibility to the Chamber. The election of the Chamber is the only one at which the country decides main issues. The triennial election which renews one-third of the membership of the Senate never brings to Parliament a weighty contribution of new men with new ideas. It scarcely agitates the surface of politics. No Prime Minister-designate would dream of constructing a Government on the principle that it must first of all be agreeable to the Senate. Still less would he harbour the thought of deliberately employing the Upper Chamber as a weapon against the Lower. Such a project would lead straight to the suppression of the Senate. But the head of a Government, if he is wise, will cultivate the good opinion of the Senate, and, wise or not, will of necessity include three or four Senators in his Cabinet. In the delicate situations in which it is necessary to find a Prime Minister who is not too intimately involved in the struggles of parties a Senator is, indeed, frequently chosen for the post.

Given the conditions of its origin, its Constitutional function and the limited but respectable authority which it has acquired, the general attitude of the Senate can be inferred without difficulty. It is, like *The Times*, pro-Governmental with a Conservative tendency. But its Conservatism is of a peculiar type. Like every other institution the Senate is caught in the chronic ambiguity of French politics. It is socially Conservative in tendency, bourgeois, with a pronounced distaste for adventures. At the same time it is Conservative in defence of the Republican régime and, therefore, in its majority, an upholder of the *lois laïques*. This disconcerting double character appears plainly in its

attitude towards the Governments which it has overthrown. In 1896 M. Léon Bourgeois had offended the Senate by his revolutionary proposal for the establishment of an income tax, at that time resented by the wealthy middle class, and especially by the large business interests. The Government of M. Herriot was overthrown in 1925, not only because it had to confess to a secret inflation of the currency, but because the Senate disliked the fiscal reforms in its Budget and distrusted its coquetting with the Socialist proposal for a capital levy. In both cases the Senate no doubt believed that it had the approval of a solid bourgeois opinion in the country; without such a belief it would not have dared to act. In doing so, however, it showed its own natural leanings. It acted as a socially Conservative body. The other aspect of its character, its orthodox Republicanism, was revealed in its dismissal of M. Tardieu in 1930. In spite of the social Conservatism of his Ministry, M. Tardieu from the beginning incurred the displeasure of the Senate by relying in an unusual degree on the clerical elements in the Chamber and including several clerical members among his under-secretaries. The occasion of the defeat of the Government was the resignation of some Ministers who were involved in a case of alleged financial influence in politics, but the critical debate made it clear that the chief objection of the Senate was to the composition of the Ministry and the nature of its majority.

Normally, however, the Senate shows a proper disposition to accept the Governments provided by the Chamber of Deputies. It rarely receives a Ministry with declared hostility, an immediate *parti pris*. On the

contrary, it sometimes goes to great lengths to establish a *modus vivendi* with a new Government, especially one which can claim that its policy has been recently approved at the polls. It is significant, for instance, that the Senate acquiesced in the drastic procedure of the Radical and Socialist majority of 1924, which compelled the resignation of the President of the Republic. In the ordinary course the Senate is content to perform its subordinate function as a revising assembly. It can, and often does, exercise an indirect influence in favour of one Government or against another by accelerating or delaying, as the case may be, the consideration of measures. It can shelve a Bill for a Session or two by the simple device of omitting to call for a report from its committee. There is, moreover, no denying the value of much of its criticism; its air of ponderation is not altogether a pose. Its Finance Committee has a reputation for competence and, apart from its prejudice against reform, for measure. Against a Chamber which has momentarily lost its discipline and is unable to resist demagogic appeals for increased expenditure it has more than once raised a barrier for which Governments have been secretly grateful.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE PRESIDENCY AND SOME PRESIDENTS

“ROYALTY,” wrote Bagehot, “is a government in which the attention of the nation is concentrated on one person doing interesting actions. A Republic is a government in which that attention is divided between many, who are all doing uninteresting actions.” And it is true that, of the five or six characteristics which Bagehot admired in a Constitutional Monarchy, the French Presidency possesses only one: that of being apparently the supreme power in the State while the real rulers change. The authors of the Constitution copied the functions of the Monarch without attempting to reproduce the attributes of the Person.

As the dignified element in the Constitution the President is not even remotely comparable with a Monarch. He is not the head of society. He does not move in the same circles as the bearers of titles of Royal and Imperial origin whose doings fill the *mondanités* columns of *Figaro*. Indeed, the divorce between the political and the higher social world of Paris is so complete that a recent American Ambassador (of all people) conceived it as a duty to attempt a reconciliation. Nor does the genuine respect in which the Presidency is held among the people protect it against the playful malice of a race given to irony, not to speak of the virulent disparagement of the *Action Française*.

M. Fallières was the butt of all the chansonniers in the hey-day of the cabarets, and, being an intelligent man, enjoyed the jokes. But if the President is not enshrined in a setting of Royal solemnity, he is nevertheless the most conspicuous person in the country. He is constantly in the public eye. Much more than half the time he devotes to his official duties is occupied by an interminable round of pseudo-social activities. Hardly a day passes without his visiting some exhibition, opening some hospital, inaugurating a new bridge or a boulevard, presiding at a banquet or attending a gala performance at a theatre. Permanently tall-hatted, he travels during his term of office to every part of the country, stopping at stations here and there to say an appropriate word to the municipal councillors on the platform. He shows *le visage de la France* in North Africa. No modern President can evade these ceremonial exigencies, however irksome he may find them. He is "the prisoner of the Elysée."

These decorative functions give the President all the appearance of a figure of parade. In reality he is much more than that. The ornamental in him is so visible that it hides the useful. He does not only, in Bagehot's phrase, "act as a disguise" for the Government which really governs; he is a disguise for himself. It is not an uncommon experience to meet Frenchmen who are unaware of his less visible political functions, while, curiously enough, they overestimate those of the British Monarch. Having an exaggerated impression of the personal action of King Edward VII. in forwarding the *entente cordiale*, they almost go the length of imagining that Parliamentary government is a cloak for the

exercise of an occult Monarchical influence beside which the powers of their own President seem trivial. This opinion is undoubtedly the result of a confusion of two notions of power which should be kept distinct. In one aspect the British Sovereign possesses an authority of which the French President is totally destitute. He inherits the immense tradition of the kingship, with all its moral and even mystical attributes. The President of the Republic has literally nothing to oppose to this inestimable store of prestige ; he is, by comparison, a mere functionary appointed for seven years. He may even be deposed, and the operation, as events have shown, has little of the character of a revolution. But the inherent and permanent authority of the British kingship is not for everyday use. It is essentially a latent power, and the less it is employed the greater it is. In the regular conduct of public business, on the other hand, the action of the King is defined and circumscribed. Here, the French President sustains comparison with him. The President, like the King, has the right to be consulted by Ministers ; he has not only the right but the duty to advise and warn. For the exercise of these privileges he has ample opportunity, since he presides at all the more formal meetings of the Council of Ministers. He is actually present, therefore, while Ministers themselves are discussing capital points of policy. He has all the advantage of being able to express his opinion directly and at a moment chosen by himself, before minds are made up and irrevocable decisions have been reached. On the whole, his intervention in current affairs is more regular and probably more effective than that of the British King.

There is, in any case, one function of the Head of the State which is much more onerous and delicate for the President than for the King. He is more frequently called upon, and in conditions of greater complexity, to select the statesman who is to be charged with the task of forming a Government. In British politics the choice is commonly dictated by events; it is obvious which party should take office, and the acknowledged leader of that party naturally becomes the head of the Government. There are, it is true, occasions on which the act of the Sovereign is not a mere endorsement but a substantial decision. A Governmental party may be divided on the question of leadership, in which case there is a real responsibility of selection. In 1894, for instance, the successor of Gladstone might conceivably have been Lord Spencer rather than Lord Rosebery. But a French President is singularly fortunate if he is not compelled, on several occasions during his period of office, to be a real arbiter between competing claimants. Between 1924 and 1931, under the Presidency of M. Gaston Doumergue, no fewer than fifteen Ministries were successively set up, and in addition there were five abortive attempts to form Governments. Altogether, therefore, M. Doumergue issued twenty invitations to leading politicians to take the office of Prime Minister. In a large proportion of these crises it was by no means immediately apparent who was the proper person to be called upon. A single example—an extreme one—will serve to show the degree of complexity which the problem may attain. The Briand Government of 1929 was overturned by a majority drawn from the two extremes of the Chamber. The victors thus fortuitously

assembled were clearly incapable of forming a coalition for the purposes of government. In dealing with this crisis the President began by applying a rule which, in other circumstances, is often effective; he called upon M. Daladier, the Radical leader, as the head of the strongest group among the opponents of the late Government. That attempt failed. He then turned to M. Clementel, a Radical Senator. That plan was equally unsuccessful. Finally, the President gave M. Tardieu a commission to act as broker, with a wide liberty of action. After bewildering manœuvres a Government was at last constituted. In the course of these protracted negotiations at least four different combinations of groups were attempted, ranging from a Radical-Socialist coalition on the Left to the Centre-Right coalition which was the ultimate outcome of the crisis.

In more favourable conditions it is less necessary for the personal initiative of the President to come into play. The vote by which a Ministry is defeated usually affords some indication as to the kind of combination which should take its place. A transference of Centre votes towards Right or Left may show that the centre of gravity of the Chamber has definitely moved in one direction or the other. In such a case the new Prime Minister will often be found without difficulty in the party which is the backbone of the new majority. Or it may equally well be that the questions at issue clearly require a particular man, perhaps a non-party statesman, to deal with them. If either of these simple solutions is indicated the President is easily made aware of the fact. His consultations with the Presidents of the Chamber and Senate, with the party leaders and the

chairmen of the most important committees, will reveal a consensus of opinion which must impress him. It is true that he is under no positive obligation to follow these advisers. If he takes a different view of the Parliamentary situation he may ignore their suggestions. In practice, however, he will rarely do so. The Constitutional limit placed on his action is fixed by the rule that Ministers are responsible to Parliament, and by the necessary corollary of this rule that the President should select a Prime Minister-designate whose Government is likely to be acceptable to the Chamber. Short of open conflict with Parliament, or of a systematic attempt to impose his own will, he has a large discretion. At most times his action is perfunctory, objectively indicated by a given situation. But on occasion he wields the momentary authority of an umpire, with the full right to give judgment in the particular cause which is submitted to him.

For the holder of this office the Constitution has prescribed a mode of election which almost necessarily results in the choice of a man who has passed a great portion of his life in the struggles of politics. The electoral college is the National Assembly, which is constituted by the Chamber and Senate sitting together. It is not unnatural that promotion to the most dignified position in the State should come to be regarded as the crowning reward of long public service. As the election is purely a Parliamentary affair, even the choice of candidates being limited in practice to the Parliamentary world, the question of the Presidency is, as a rule, markedly separate from electoral politics. The matter is not even thought of during Parliamentary or

municipal elections. So little does it engage popular attention that the most widely read newspapers scarcely mention it until the last week or fortnight preceding the meeting of the National Assembly. Even then there is usually no deep stir of interest. Only when an election assumes a symbolical significance, like that at which M. Poincaré was victorious in 1913, or that at which M. Briand was defeated in 1931, does it move the public mind. Parliament itself makes a show of indifference, which, however, is partly feigned. The lack of interest is genuine enough until the last year of a President's term, but at that stage a certain liveliness manifests itself. It is whispered that some distinguished statesman has a candidate in his pocket. Some party newspaper lets fall a hint of its preference. Furtive ambitions betray themselves. Excellent Senators who have grown grey in the service of the State begin to make speeches of studious moderation on hotly disputed questions in order to show that it will not be difficult, when occasion requires, to discover men who are capable of "standing above the parties." All this is preliminary, the mere laying of ground-bait. Active sport begins in the last few weeks before the election. During that short period Chamber and Senate lend themselves, sometimes with tolerant indifference, sometimes with passion, to obscure canvassing and intrigue. Candidatures blossom and fade. Coteries form and dissolve. Boldly, or with coquettish modesty, the principal pretenders allow their claims to be put forward. Lesser men let it be known that, if a favourite should stumble on the course, they are ready to be among the dark horses. The struggle is, however, almost silent. Public speeches are

against all the solemn etiquette of the occasion. At most, a candidate will deliver himself of a discreet note, in the third person, to inform the world that in his view the President, whoever he might be, should be impartial, respecting all parties but under obligations to none.

In these negotiations and intrigues the organised parties are far from being idle, but their operations do not necessarily, by any means, determine the course of the contest. If the result is so often surprising it is precisely because it cannot be conducted on strict party lines, or indeed on any regular lines at all. The National Assembly is not a body capable of rigid organisation. It meets only for the occasion. The disparity in composition between the Chamber and the Senate prevents it from being homogeneous. The group system in the Upper House is largely independent of that of the Lower. There are groups of independent members who are glad of an opportunity of acting in complete liberty. In an assembly so composed party interest is a fragile thread with many kinks and thin stretches. An attempt at more effective organisation has several times been made. The groups of the Left in Senate and Chamber have held a preliminary meeting to select a candidate. But this *réunion des gauches* has more than once resulted in the discomfiture of its promoters. In 1924, for instance, the meeting chose as its candidate M. Painlevé, who had received about 300 votes as against 150 given to M. Doumergue. The bulk of the members of the Right took advantage of this situation and supported M. Doumergue, for whom a large proportion of the minority of the *réunion des gauches*, casting party



loyalty to the winds, also voted. M. Doumergue was elected. The resistance of the National Assembly to party influences revealed by this incident is strongly favoured by the circumstance that the vote is secret. Each member of the Assembly is called up to the tribune, but nobody knows what name appears on the bulletin he casts into the urn. This arrangement encourages every factor which could conceivably come into play to thwart the best-laid schemes of candidates and parties alike. It is sometimes said that the secret ballot is the "liberator of consciences." In the small community of Parliament it is equally the liberator of every kind of personal motive, of unavowed admiration or private obligation, of jealousy or spite, of petty interest or ambition. There are Senators, not necessarily well disposed towards their President, who carry on a surreptitious campaign for him because they hope to take his place, or at any rate to profit by the series of vacancies which his promotion will create. Every election is followed by numerous accusations of "treason," and the voting usually shows that some of them must be well founded. It is probably true that, after all the manœuvring and canvassing, in spite of all the verbal promises exacted or voluntarily given, the real intentions of from three to five hundred of the nine hundred members of the National Assembly are unknown.

If the Presidential election is fruitful in surprises the reason is plain. The issue is neither wholly a question of persons nor wholly a question of party politics, but a mixture of the two. In this respect no contest could be more illuminating than that of 1931, in which M. Briand

was defeated by M. Doumer, the President of the Senate. A man of seventy-four, M. Doumer could look back on a career of hard-earned success, the characteristic career of a politician of respectable though not brilliant abilities, who had pursued his ambition with all the patience and stubborn will of an Auvergnat of peasant stock. In a course of marked zigzags he had passed brusquely from one side of politics to the other, but was not stamped with the definite impress of either. It is highly improbable that, in the first instance, he had the slightest desire to present himself as a party candidate. But politics soon intruded. The owner of a Conservative newspaper openly espoused the cause of M. Doumer and, in real or feigned anticipation of a Briand candidature, of which there had been rumours, launched a virulent campaign against the Minister of Foreign Affairs, placarding the country from end to end with articles attacking his person and policy. M. Briand's political position at the moment was vulnerable. Certain events in Europe, which had momentarily checked the policy of Franco-German *rapprochement*, had injured his prestige. Both the Senate and the Chamber had, indeed, recently approved M. Briand, but the wound was not entirely healed. In the country, nevertheless, he enjoyed an immense popularity. In Parliament itself, apart from immediate controversies, his personal charm, his eloquence and skill in debate, his ripe experience had made him acceptable to both Houses. Among all these considerations, however, it was plainly the bitter campaign against him in the Parisian Press and in the country which precipitated his decision to stand for the Presidency. Here, then, were

two contrasted types of candidature. M. Doumer, kept out of controversial politics by his official position, relying mainly on his claim to the reward of long service, had the investiture of the Moderates thrust upon him. M. Briand, whose right to the gratitude of Parliament would in other circumstances have been unquestioned, presented himself as an active politician, a Minister still in office and fighting for a cause. He was challenged, and his election to the Presidency would have been a triumphant vindication. Setting aside subsidiary considerations, it is not difficult to determine the chief causes of his defeat. First in the field, M. Doumer received on personal grounds the votes of many members, especially Senators, who were among the strongest political adherents of M. Briand. On the other hand, many Moderates who were ready to recognise the personal claims of M. Briand voted against the protagonist of a Franco-German *rapprochement*, though few of them had dared to do so in the public divisions in Parliament. It was in this tangle of personal and political motives that M. Briand was tripped up.

This election reinforced a tradition which has been slowly established. The National Assembly has nearly always shrunk from giving the Presidential election too emphatic a political significance. It has distrusted a man with a cause. To the statesman coming hot from the fray it has preferred the Parliamentary dignitary of less belligerent aspect. In the eleven elections which have taken place since the Constitution was settled on a regular basis—that is to say, since the resignation of Marshal MacMahon—the successful candidates have included no fewer than four Presidents of the Senate

and three Presidents of the Chamber of Deputies. There have also been two "outsiders," Sadi Carnot and Félix Faure, both ex-Ministers, but neither of whom had attained any particular prominence in public life. Only two Prime Ministers, M. Poincaré and M. Millerand, have been chosen, and both were elected in exceptional circumstances. The former was carried to the Presidency by the wave of Nationalism set in motion by the Agadir panic. The latter was the titular chief of post-war Nationalism, and was elected by a *bleu horizon* Parliament. Against these exceptional choices of two active and combative statesmen may be set the more significant rejections of three men as eminent as Jules Ferry, M. Clemenceau and M. Briand. In its preference for more neutral figures the National Assembly has perhaps been inspired by that dread of the abuse of personal power which the repeated successes of Bonapartism planted deep in the French mind. Ordinarily it wants a President who is likely to allow Parliamentary institutions to work normally. In the early days of the Republic the President had necessarily, indeed, to be a partisan; he must be a Republican. This tradition still holds in the sense that no outstanding and unequivocal representative of the reactionary Right has the smallest chance of being elected. A Moderate, a social Conservative, may receive the votes of the Right, but he must not himself be an out-and-out reactionary. A "safe" Republican, a man of experience, a man without inordinate ambition, a man not too much involved in the conflicts of the moment: such is, in normal times, the ideal President in the view of the National Assembly.

This prudence has not always, however, received its

due reward. The choice of the National Assembly has sometimes proved unwise and still more often unlucky. For an institution designed to introduce an element of permanence into Parliamentary government the Presidency has been singularly erratic in function. Accidents have been numerous. In point of fact, only five Presidents—four of them since 1899—have served their full term. Of the others, one voluntarily resigned, two were forced to resign, one became insane, one died suddenly and one was assassinated. It might almost be supposed that the Law-givers of 1875 were endowed with second sight, for, in a Constitution which left out so many things, they included a precise provision to meet the case of a sudden vacancy in the Presidency; in such an emergency the National Assembly is immediately summoned to elect a new President. Most of the incidents which have terminated so many careers prematurely were, on the worst interpretation, examples of what the superstitious call fatality. Others, however, deserve discussion because they have a bearing on the important problem of the practical extent of the President's powers.

The function of an organ of government, as theoretically defined, is one thing; its exercise in the everyday working of the Constitution is another. Experiment, adaptation and even open conflict will be necessary before custom fixes its relations with other organs. This consideration alone would suffice to account for half the controversies which have raged, at one time and another, around the Presidential power. But the difficulties of the process of adjustment, especially in the relations between President and Ministers, have been greatly

accentuated by the circumstance that the Head of the State is a man who has passed his life in politics. He deals with Ministers as one who belongs to the same world as themselves. Many of his colleagues have fought as partisans by his side, or as adversaries have crossed swords with him. There is nothing in his public life, and little in his private life, of which they are ignorant. No President is a hero to the members of the Cabinet. Veneration for his office is coloured by the degree of respect felt for the man. If the President divided the whole of his time between his ceremonial duties and a dignified seclusion in the Elysée his political past would be of less consequence. But he is, on the contrary, constantly involved in the discussion of business and is in regular and frequent contact with Ministers. And while his intervention in affairs is normally limited to the giving of advice, that advice comes from a man, who, in most cases, is destined to survive the Cabinet he is addressing. His knowledge of the work of previous Governments and his acquaintance with the points of all important questions give weight to everything he says. At the same time, in all he says and does, he is bound to respect in every Government, whatever its party complexion, the authority conferred on it by Parliament. His task is therefore one of extreme delicacy. It is at once an advantage and a disadvantage that the person called upon to pick his way among such difficulties should himself be a politician. An advantage, because he knows from experience how Parliamentary government is carried on and, however strongly he may press his own view, he will not do so with the ignorant obstinacy of the

amateur. A disadvantage, because, with the best will in the world, he cannot rid himself of the preferences and prejudices of his past. There must be questions in which he is ardently interested and on which he has long ago made up his mind. There must be Ministers whom he likes and other Ministers whose whole trend of policy he distrusts. It is no wonder that there have been Presidencies in which the disadvantage has outweighed the advantage.

It is largely owing to this personal factor that the Presidential power still defies precise definition. The precedents of fifty years are contradictory. Even where no question of actual abuse of power has arisen, different Presidents have had different conceptions of their office, and each has been able to invoke both law and precedent in his favour. M. Fallières, assiduous in the performance of his ceremonial functions, scarcely interfered with Ministers in the conduct of public business. M. Poincaré, with a formalist's respect for Ministerial responsibility, nevertheless followed affairs closely, offered counsel liberally and, in regard to matters on which he held a strong conviction, did not hesitate to use his moral influence to the full. Such variations, occurring in quite recent times, show that even now there is no settled rule which determines in detail and within exact limits the field of permissible action. In no department of affairs is the uncertainty so noticeable as in that of foreign policy. Here the President is obviously less hampered by the obligation of neutrality towards the parties than he is in matters of domestic controversy, in which an act of partisanship would be a blazing indiscretion. He represents the principle of

continuity, and in international policy is often able, perhaps too readily, to convince himself that he is the spokesman of the national point of view. His intervention in this province is, moreover, encouraged by the vagueness of the least written of written Constitutions. All his official acts, the subjects of decrees or of public declarations, must be countersigned by a Minister, and the Minister alone is responsible. But in international negotiation he has numberless opportunities of asserting his opinion at every stage, unhindered by any immediate and precise Constitutional check. He has official cognizance, too, of all the existing diplomatic engagements of the State, and his knowledge must often be superior to that of the general body of Ministers. All treaties, including secret treaties, are signed by him. While few Ministers except heads of Governments and Ministers of Foreign Affairs can have seen the Franco-Russian Treaty of Alliance until it was divulged in 1918, every President, from 1892 onwards, must have been fully aware of its terms.

With such advantages, it is not surprising that vigorous Presidents should have acted with energy in this particular province, and that so many of the disputes about the extent of the Presidential power have been concerned with foreign policy. The precedents are singularly varied. MacMahon practically insisted on personally appointing the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of War and of Marine. Grévy took a dangerous negotiation with Germany out of the hands of the Foreign Minister and conducted it himself. Even the Constitutional Loubet co-operated so actively and in such intimacy with Delcassé that Combes, by no means



a negligible personality, found it necessary to remind him publicly that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister were responsible for the general management of external policy. M. Fallières, on the other hand, was not tempted to assert himself even by the Agadir crisis, and permitted without interference the transition from the pacifism of M. Caillaux to the Nationalism of M. Poincaré, when the latter succeeded to the Premiership in 1912. It may be remarked that Loubet nursed no ambitious designs and that his past was free from conspicuous partisanship, while Grévy was not masterful or in the least degree inclined to disregard the spirit of Republican institutions. The Presidency of M. Poincaré was, however, that of a politician of decided views, and was stamped with all the characteristics, good and bad, of its kind. M. Poincaré did not disappoint the expectations of a Nationalist *redressement* which had been aroused at the time of his election. In the brief period which elapsed before the European war broke out the atmosphere of France was changed. Events themselves, the whole catastrophic trend of international affairs, were doubtless the main agents of this change. We are not here concerned, however, with M. Poincaré as the incarnation of the Nationalist spirit, but with his action as President. That action was logically consistent at once with his personal opinions and with his conception of the duties and privileges of his office. On the one hand, M. Poincaré did not seek to overrule Ministers; actual decisions were always decisions of the Cabinet. On the other hand, he argued and urged incessantly. In spite of official discretion there is clear evidence of both these attitudes, especially with

reference to post-war controversies. On the question of the opportuneness of the Armistice he differed from Clemenceau, but when the Prime Minister threatened to resign, the President, obeying the Constitutional rule, gave way. His advice, persistently reiterated, was so frequently disregarded during the Peace negotiations that he always declared, rather ruefully, that the Treaty of Versailles was none of his making. His attitude towards Ministers was, in short, formally correct. But throughout his period of office he supported one policy in foreign affairs and opposed another, frankly in accordance with his views as a politician, without pretending to impartiality. In the dubious borderland between deliberation and decision he probably exerted an authority closely resembling in kind and surpassing in quality that of a responsible Minister. It is difficult to believe, for instance, that when he went to Russia with the Minister of Foreign Affairs in July 1914, he left the material negotiations entirely in the hands of his companion. He had been in Russia only two years before, when head of the Government, and on a similar errand. M. Poincaré the President, who had abandoned none of the opinions of M. Poincaré the Prime Minister, can hardly have refrained from energetic intervention.

After all these variations the case of M. Millerand raised the whole question of the Presidential power in an acute form, extending the controversy even to domestic affairs. Some months before his election M. Millerand had publicly declared himself in favour of a revision of the Constitution which would give the President more authority. On accepting candidature in September 1920, he told his supporters that, apart

from any Constitutional revision, he intended to act with more personal vigour than had been customary, especially in the matter of foreign policy. In a speech made six months after his election he asserted the right of the President to have personal ideas and a personal policy. He soon found an occasion to apply in the most drastic fashion the principle thus laid down. In 1922 he recalled M. Briand from Cannes by telegram, breaking off the negotiations in which the Prime Minister was engaged with Mr. Lloyd George. M. Briand, though undefeated in Parliament, resigned. These speeches and acts of the President were sufficiently ominous, but, as they related to international affairs, they were not in themselves enough to provoke open revolt against his masterfulness. M. Millerand's real challenge was made when he boldly claimed the right to personal independence in the province of home politics. In a speech at Evreux in October 1923, obviously in preparation for the general election of the following year, he not only repeated his suggestion for an extension of the Presidential power, but outlined a programme of general policy which, whatever its merits, was decidedly more acceptable to the parties of the Right than to those of the Left. A little later he allowed it to be announced on his behalf in the Chamber that he would resign rather than promulgate a Law re-establishing single-member constituencies for the forthcoming election. He made a still more dangerous move by gratuitously affirming his power to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies after a Ministerial crisis.

For some of these statements and acts M. Millerand could plead either the written authority of the Constitu-

tion or the support of precedents. There were others which, if not demonstrably unconstitutional, went decidedly beyond the limits which custom had established. In the matter of personal policy, for example, no objection could be raised to the President's putting forward his views in the privacy of the Council of Ministers, but the haranguing of the country over the heads of the Cabinet was another thing. A partisan speech, even if it is not resented by the Government of the day, may very well be highly offensive and embarrassing to some succeeding Government. The Evreux oration had not the "impartial partiality" of a King's Speech, which formally reflects with equal fidelity the contradictory views of different Governments in turn. It was a personal announcement of a personal programme. The case against M. Millerand lies in the cumulative effect of a series of acts. He had spoken almost as if he were an independent Prime Minister and he had taken sides. In the circumstances the hint that he might revive the procedure of dissolution, which had not been used for forty years and was generally considered to be a dead letter, looked like a warning that, if Parliamentary conditions prevented the formation of a Ministry by the President's friends, he would appeal to the country rather than accept a Ministry formed by his adversaries. In any case the President was regarded by the parties of the Left as a declared enemy, who was arrogating to himself a personal power inconsistent with the principles of Parliamentary government in a Republic. After the election of 1924 M. Herriot, the leader of the Cartel des Gauches, refused to form a Government at the invitation of M. Millerand. The President had no recourse but

that of calling upon a member of the minority to constitute a Ministry. The Chamber of Deputies then passed the following resolution: "The Chamber, resolved not to enter into relations with a Ministry which, by its composition, is the negation of the rights of Parliament, refuses the unconstitutional debate to which it is invited, and decides to adjourn all discussion until the day when a Government shall come before it which is constituted in conformity with the sovereign will of the people." The Senate, on the same day, fell into line with the Chamber by adjourning the interpellations on the Ministerial declaration of the minority Government. The President of the Republic thereupon resigned.

It has been argued by experts in law that the "strike of Ministers" and the resolution of the Chamber which forced the resignation of M. Millerand were unconstitutional acts. According to Article 6 of the Organic Law of February 25, 1875, the President can only be held responsible for the offence of high treason and that responsibility is not political but penal. The offences of M. Millerand—if they were offences—were purely political. It is therefore urged that the appropriate procedure open to objectors would have been to bring into play, at the time the offences were committed, the principle of the responsibility of Ministers for the acts of the President: in other words, to interpellate the Government then in office. In the absence of any such protest in due time and in proper form the offences should have been regarded as condoned. Against this reasoning several answers, not lacking in cogency, could be advanced. In the first place, it is not clear that Ministers could be held responsible for the most serious

of the misdemeanours with which M. Millerand was charged. Their responsibility arises from the provision of the Organic Laws that each "act" of the President must be countersigned by a Minister. Unless the telegram to M. Briand be counted an exception, however, M. Millerand was not reproached with definite acts of government requiring, or by their nature capable of receiving, the written endorsement of a Minister. In particular, speeches and statements of intention cannot be countersigned. Secondly, the view that offences are condoned if they are not immediately challenged carries the questionable implication that it is not competent for a Legislature to correct an error, or to make good an omission, of its predecessor. If that principle were accepted it would be possible for an ambitious President, with the connivance of a friendly majority in Parliament, to establish an interpretation of the Constitution which would permanently magnify the powers of his office. On the whole, the most reasonable inference to be drawn from all the facts would seem to be that the Constitution itself did not furnish adequate means for dealing with the Millerand case. It did not provide a rule to prevent a President from openly taking sides in politics. Whatever doubt may be thrown on the legality of the proceedings which compelled the President to resign, it is certain, on the other hand, that if M. Millerand had succeeded in his aim he would have accomplished a minor revolution. If revolution there was to be, then of two possible ones the less harmful carried the day.

With the aid of the older precedents and of the illuminating Millerand episode it is possible to measure the progress which has been made towards a practical definition

of the Presidential power. While no absolute rule has been fixed, there are now certain limits marked by experience which it is improper and dangerous for a President to overstep. The fundamental principle still holds that the Head of the State is not a mere automaton. The most stringent reading of the Constitution leaves room, and probably will always leave room, for discreet personal action. What remains in question is the precise degree of independence and authority which he is entitled to assume in taking such action. Here, custom is taking shape, though it has not yet crystallised. In this matter a sharp distinction, not founded on theoretical principle but real in practice, continues to be made between domestic and international affairs. The scope for permissible intervention is greater in the latter than in the former province. Even in international affairs, however, it is possible to trace a progressive diminution of the President's freedom of movement. It is scarcely conceivable that a modern President should, like MacMahon, impose on a Prime Minister a Foreign Minister of his own choice, or that, like Grévy, he should take exclusive charge of a particular negotiation. More and more his intervention is consultative and advisory. But an energetic President is still able, with impunity, to press his opinion with an insistence which British Ministers would not readily tolerate in the Sovereign. There is good reason to believe, for instance, that M. Doumergue took the strongest line in the naval negotiations of 1930-31 and caused the views of the experts of the Ministry of Marine to prevail against the determined policy of the Quai d'Orsay. This, however, was on the boundary of

legitimate interference. In the region of home politics the President is constrained to walk with infinitely greater caution. It is here that the Millerand case is supremely instructive and will probably stand as a conclusive precedent. No President before him had taken up so aggressive an attitude ; none had gone so far as to put forward, publicly and in his own name, a considered scheme of internal policy. His failure cannot but confirm the principle, already implicit in the Constitution and in Parliamentary practice, that the President's expression of his opinions should be occasional and restrained, and that he should avoid positive partisanship. Curiously enough, no serious attempt seems to have been made by any Government to impose a censorship on the President's public utterances. M. Doumergue, the immediate successor of M. Millerand, made one speech—at Nice in 1931, on the eve of his retirement—which can hardly have been approved beforehand by the Cabinet. Until that moment, however, M. Doumergue's studious reticence during seven years had been in marked contrast with the oratorical manifestoes of his immediate predecessor. M. Doumergue's model prudence, continued almost to the very end of his term, was more significant than the Parthian shot of the Nice speech. Whatever liberty of speech the President may enjoy, however, he must bow to the fundamental duty of accepting, and working with, any Ministry of any shade provided by Parliament. That rule is certainly established. It is a matter for speculation whether this obligation would have been scrupulously observed if M. Millerand had remained in office, or if M. Clemenceau had been elected after his virtual dictatorship during the



war. Even now it is true that in a confused crisis, in which there is doubt as to what kind of Government can most surely obtain a majority, a President is sometimes suspected of manœuvring to arrive eventually at a solution which he personally desires. But his action cannot go beyond a scarcely perceptible touch to the helm. In practice it is Parliament which decides the mode of formation of the Ministry. Flagrant interference by the Head of the State in this matter is inconceivable. Apart from any Constitutional rule, such intervention would embroil him in the hottest party controversy, in conditions in which his position would be indefensible.

In law, the power of the President is fixed by the central principle of his irresponsibility. In fact, it is gradually submitting itself to the limitations so imposed. The last word in matters of policy must be with Ministers, for the overwhelming reason that power ultimately settles where responsibility resides. Prévost-Paradol interpreted in advance the doctrine which the Constitution-makers adopted; "to define clearly and strictly limit the responsibility of the President and confine it to the duties appertaining directly to his office, while leaving to the Cabinet all the responsibility for policy in order to assure to it its full power." The Cabinet, answerable for all acts of government, including those of the President, must in the long run insist on deciding what those acts shall be. The case becomes clear if it is considered the other way round and the President is supposed responsible. Such an arrangement would be a direct invitation to him to have a personal policy. If he had not, he would have to answer for what his Ministers did. It follows from these considerations — and if any

President persistently neglected the lesson it would be forced upon him by the inexorable logic of events—that the Head of the State who commits an arbitrary act of policy is trespassing on the domain of Ministers. His very irresponsibility carries with it a kind of responsibility—the duty of abnegation and self-restraint. When Loubet, in his old age, was asked for his opinion on the President's powers, he replied curtly: "They will always be too great." The implied doctrine is sound. The President may have personal opinions but he must not have a personal policy. He may advise but he must not command. He may object but he must not resist. In spite of aberrations, the history of the Presidency is one of progress towards the acceptance of these principles.

## CHAPTER X

### THE PRESS

THERE exists in France, as in many other countries, a widespread tendency to overrate the influence of newspapers as a combative force in political elections and as a factor in the formation of everyday opinion. The claims advanced on behalf of the Press do not indeed reach the extreme heights to which they sometimes soar in England and America. No one refers to the readers of any Paris newspaper as an "army" of several millions (including families) which can be marshalled and manœuvred. No parallel could be found in France to the crude assertion made in regard to a certain British journal that it had "put in" a Government at a general election. But an excessive importance is undoubtedly attached to the value of newspaper support in ensuring the success of parties at the polls. And the pessimistic friends and the cynical detractors of democratic government are alike in thinking that public opinion on current affairs is in a considerable degree "newspaper-made."

Whatever may be the exact measure of the power of the Press in electoral politics, there would be no difficulty in proving that it is not necessarily a predominating force either in England or in France. If it were as decisive as some suppose, the British Labour party, so far from attaining office, would never form more than

an inconsiderable fraction of the House of Commons. An abundance of evidence goes to show that the proportion of readers whose votes the most popular newspaper can effectually command must be small. In the French general election in 1924 the consensus of newspaper opinion was so impressive that the most watchful observers were deceived, and expected a victory for M. Poincaré, but M. Poincaré was overwhelmed. In 1906 the great bulk of the British Press was on the Conservative side, but there occurred an unprecedented turn-over of votes in favour of the Liberals. The lesson to be drawn from these examples, to which numerous additions could be made from the electoral history of both countries, is that the influence of the Press, though never negligible, is not absolute, but varies with the occasion. A given amount of propaganda does not inevitably produce a given amount of effect. Leaving out of account the firm adherents of the parties, the unattached elector votes from a variety of motives, of which consideration for the views of his newspaper is only one. His independent estimate of his own interest in the main issue, his itch for change, his tendency to drift on the prevailing current of local opinion, his personal preference for one candidate or another—all these factors must come into any reasonable calculation. It may be laid down as an assured principle that at an election dominated by some question affecting fundamental interests, the electorate as a whole will vote on the merits of the question. Once public opinion is in decisive movement in one direction or the other on such an issue not the most raging and tearing Press campaign

can break its force. It was Free Trade which determined the result of the British election of 1906. The French election of 1924 was decided by the failure of the Ruhr policy and the sudden increase in taxation which M. Poincaré found it necessary to impose. In each case the patent facts spoke so loudly that the voices of advocates were smothered. On any number of occasions the tax-gatherer has proved himself a more efficient electioneerer than a battalion of newspapers.

If this phenomenon of the comparative failure of newspaper influence were exclusively confined to France many Anglo-Saxon observers, and particularly journalists, would be tempted to find the cause of it in the inferiority of the Press, both as a purveyor of news and as an instrument of propaganda. The most popular Parisian newspapers conspicuously fail to present the glittering and comprehensive panorama with which every London daily seeks to impress and charm its readers. Not the best equipped among them has anything comparable with the elaborate machinery for the gathering and transmission of news which its British contemporaries regard as a first necessity. It would, however, be a mistake to condemn the French Press out of hand as old-fashioned and inefficient. After making every allowance for French conservatism and thrift, it is fair to assume that editors know their business and, on the whole, give the public what it wants. The *Petit Parisien*, which claims to have a larger circulation than any other paper in the world, may reasonably be taken as satisfying the mass of general readers. If a French Harmsworth possessing unlimited resources

were to launch a newspaper he might invent fresh features and improve the photographs, but it is safe to say that he would not produce anything resembling the voluminous publications of London and New York.

With minor variations the Paris newspapers of wide circulation all conform to the same general model. The three first pages suffice for the bulk of general and political news. On the front page is the record of the main events—political news, two or three stories of crime or accident, a cartoon, a brief and lively commentary on some topical subject, and frequently one of those articles of *grand reportage* which, since the war, have begun to menace the Frenchman's proverbial ignorance of geography. The second page is a receptacle for the overflow of articles from the first and for the miscellany of duller or less urgent items which demand space from a grudging editor. On the third page is the *Dernière Heure*, containing late general news, and almost invariably headed by foreign telegrams. It is true that the principal *journaux d'information* have formed a consortium which determines by uniform rule the number of their pages, but the withdrawal of this artificial restriction would certainly not be followed by any vast expansion. The present narrow limits necessitate an economy in presentation which, if it sometimes results in inadequate reports, is on the whole agreeable to the public. The requirements of the Parisian reader are very different from those of the Londoner or the New Yorker. As he gives less time to his newspaper he likes to read as he runs. He has, besides, his exigencies of taste. Crude fact poured out concerning every event of the day would form an

indigestible meal. The method which consists in tearing the heart out of a story and making a staggering first paragraph of it would have no charm for him. He wants succinct articles full of substance, but the facts should be enveloped in an *ambiance* which softens their primitive rudeness.

Given their exiguous scope the Paris newspapers pay a singularly marked attention to politics. Leaving aside the sporting Press, all the twenty or thirty morning papers and the eight or ten evening papers give to this heavy subject a respectable share of their best space. The proportion ranges from the moderate measure of the dailies of wide and general circulation to the overflowing abundance of the *journaux d'opinion*. The daily output of news and views concerning public affairs is enormous. Even during the Parliamentary recess a paper like the *Petit Parisien* consecrates on an average about two of the seven columns of its first page and half the available space of its third page to political news and articles. When Parliament is in session the proportion often swells far beyond this measure. It is then not uncommon for a full half of the first three pages—on which practically the whole of the essential news of the day is concentrated—to be devoted to politics.

From the purely quantitative point of view the principal agents in supplying political news to the public are the widely circulated papers ordinarily described as *journaux d'information*. Three or four of these probably have, in the sum, a circulation exceeding that of all the other daily papers taken together. Nominally, the chief *journaux d'information* are objective in their treatment of political

news. They are neither the organs of parties nor are they openly coloured by specific party connections. They carefully keep up an appearance of dealing with events and movements as they present themselves in the news, and on their merits. They would, in short, be classed as "independent" in the newspaper directories. In point of fact, however, the *Petit Parisien*, the *Matin*, the *Journal* and *Excelsior* all have a socially conservative bias, and the same remark may be made of the *Intransigeant*, the "independent" evening paper. Large vested interests themselves, they could hardly be expected to favour policies or parties which menace such interests. And whether or not they receive subsidies from the big commercial and industrial organisations, they have a clear inducement to please their most liberal advertising clientèle. It is possible that some of them may be placed under obligations, material or other, to successive governments of different parties, and it is rarely that they manifest direct and resolute hostility to any Ministry in office. But there is a marked contrast between the tolerance with which they report and comment on the doings of a Government of the Left and the generous advertisement which they give to a Government of Conservative tendency. The signed articles of the Parliamentary correspondents of the *Journal* and the *Petit Parisien*, while usually avoiding flagrant partisanship, leave little doubt as to the preferences of their authors and of the editors who employ them. It is always possible for a very rich man to obtain control of such a newspaper and, with discretion, modify its conservative character without bringing it to ruin. M. Loucheur, for example, gave to the old *Petit Journal* a



mildly Leftward bias. But such exceptions must always be rare. The immense business concern which produces a great daily tends by its very nature to be Conservative.

This tendency, acting on such a scale, has certainly to be reckoned with. It is impossible that the subtle diffusion of prejudice day by day should be totally without effect. But to argue *a priori* from the volume and the persistence of this effort that a correspondingly large proportion of opinion is "newspaper-made" would be to go far beyond the mark. The outstanding consideration in the matter is that the vast bulk of readers buy a great daily for its news. This concentration of interest is so intense that, on that account alone, the influence of mere propaganda, however insinuating, must be heavily discounted. The French reader is highly sensitive to events and reacts on occasion with astonishing rapidity. But he is one of the most sceptical readers in the world. His innate rationalism and realism have been strengthened by repeated experiences, over long periods, of a Press ordered about and censored by Government. He has long ago learned to read between the lines. An editor may dress up his news as he likes, the reader will always seek the news itself. In the case of a paper of large circulation the information counts greatly more than the tendency of the comment, at any rate in domestic politics. The truth of this observation could not be more strikingly illustrated than by the success of the *Ami du Peuple*, the buccaneer of the Parisian Press, which has achieved an enormous circulation by making its price ten centimes instead of the twenty-five centimes which all the other morning papers

demand. This paper is the chosen vehicle of the vehement Nationalist propaganda of M. Coty, who has diverted to politics a portion of the energy which gained him a fortune as a manufacturer of perfumes. Nobody supposes that the majority of the readers of the *Ami du Peuple* absorb its opinions. They buy the paper because it gives them the day's news at two-fifths of the regular price.

As a *journal d'information* the *Temps* stands apart. It is beyond all rivalry the newspaper of political documentation. Its serried columns present each evening a meagre summary of general news, but a remarkably complete survey of political news. Its anonymous leading article is regarded all over the world as reflecting with approximate fidelity the views of the Quai d'Orsay on the international question of the day. There has never been any acknowledgment of this semi-official character of the *Bulletin du Jour*, but it may fairly be said that once a newspaper has achieved a reputation abroad as an inspired exponent of national policy the Government of its own country has at least an occasional interest in using it as such. If it did not do so it would run the risk of allowing the personal opinions of the writer of the *Bulletin* to be taken as its own. While the *Temps* enjoys this flattering reputation, however, it is far from being official in its comment on domestic politics. In spite of its standing it does not always respect the Government in power. It is not even objective. Of all the French newspapers none is more representative of social Conservatism. With wilful prejudice, but with all the air of being simply realistic, the *Temps* makes a practice of describing the socially Conservative parties as the

*partis nationaux*. It scarcely refers to the reactionary Republican Federation and the Moderates in any other way. The undisguised purpose of this exaggeration is to promote the formation of an anti-Socialist *bloc*. In home politics, in short, the *Temps* may be ranked as a party paper. It places itself voluntarily among the *journaux d'opinion*.

In British journalism there is a characteristic type of newspaper which, while giving its readers a full service of news of all kinds, is at the same time an organ of partisan political opinion. It may be Liberal, like the *News-Chronicle* or the *Manchester Guardian*, or Conservative, like the *Daily Telegraph*. French papers of a similar type are comparatively few. The *grand journal d'information*, such as the *Petit Parisien* or the *Matin*, does not belong to this category. It is not professionally political. It does not present in an uninterrupted succession of leading articles its own comment on affairs, informed with its own doctrine. On the whole, those French papers which perform the double function of distributing general information and preaching a definite body of doctrine are of relatively small circulation. The *Ami du Peuple*, as has already been mentioned, is an exception. The *Echo de Paris*, whose Nationalism corresponds to the High Toryism of the *Morning Post*, is also widely read. The brilliant little *Œuvre*, which is not attached to any party but consistently supports the parties of the Left, has a circulation of some 170,000. M. Coty has given a new and violent political impulse to the literary *Figaro*. None of these compares with a *grand journal d'information* as a purveyor of news. The *Echo de Paris* and the *Œuvre*, in particular, while reporting the

events of the day, often very attractively, are more important for their points of view than for their presentation of general news. The same remark may be made with even more justice of papers like the *Socialist Populaire* and the *Quotidien*, both of which have adopted the policy of attracting readers by their news in order to bring fresh recruits to their political clientèle.

By far the most interesting feature of French journalism is the vogue of the *journal d'opinion* proper, the newspaper which is almost exclusively political and scarcely concerns itself at all with general news. The number of such sheets varies, since so many of them have singularly precarious means of support, but there are at most times eight or ten, all appearing daily. It may at first sight seem a mystery how they manage to live. Their four or eight sheets can make little appeal to the general public. They have in consequence not much profitable advertisement. Some, like the *République* and the *Action Française*, have a reliable body of *abonnés*, a partisan clientele drawn in the one case from the Royalist faithful and in the other from the stalwarts of the Radical party. It is highly probable, however, that all of them receive a good part of their revenue in the form of subsidies from rich sympathisers. Commercially, that is to say, they are produced at a loss. In a recent enquiry into the affairs of a bankrupt financier it was revealed that at least two *journaux d'opinion* had been among the beneficiaries of his munificent generosity in more prosperous times. In some cases a newspaper is effectively controlled by the rich sympathiser, especially if he is a politician, and

it is he who stands the loss on the working of the enterprise.

Essentially, the *journal d'opinion*, as its name implies, represents a political point of view. It has its small staff of writers who specialise in foreign policy, in military matters or in economic subjects. It often has its Parliamentary correspondent who contributes a sketch of the doings of the Chamber. It usually pays some attention to literature and art and the theatre, and its criticism is sometimes of a high order. But the *clou* of the paper is always the daily political article of the editor. In its highest manifestation, in fact, the *journal d'opinion* is the organ, not merely of a cause or a party, but of a man. The public life of France has continued to encourage the profession of the pamphleteer as it was practised by Swift and Defoe in the England of the eighteenth century. A Rochefort inflamed by enthusiasm for a cause promptly founded his *Lanterne* or his *Intransigeant*. Everybody engaged in politics used to open the *Aurore*, either with pleasurable anticipation or in fear and trembling, to read the daily article of Clemenceau. In the journalism of to-day there are no figures so outstanding, but the tradition persists. In the *Action Française* M. Léon Daudet every day produces an article whose violence is nearly equalled by its wit, and M. Charles Maurras a long and acerb dissertation on the political situation which is not infrequently illumined by an erudite philosophy. The *Ere Nouvelle* publishes articles by M. Herriot which occasionally strike the resonant note of the manifesto. An independent paper of this kind tends to become the organ of a personality or of a group of personalities. The *Volonté* is directed

by the generous but erratic Liberalism of M. Albert Dubarry. M. Eugene Lautier in the *Homme Libre* flings himself with humour into the cut-and-thrust of debate on behalf of his friends among the distinguished politicians, not always on the same side of politics. M. Emile Buré in the *Ordre* and M. Gustave Hervé in the *Victoire* place at the service of Nationalism all the ardour which marked the Socialism of their early days. In *La Gauche* M. Georges Ponsot preaches with agreeable dilettantism an opportunist Moderatism, and thus seconds the benevolent philosopher who signs as "Senatus" in the *Avenir* in urging Moderates and Radicals to form an anti-Socialist *bloc*. Nothing is more significant of the part played by the *journal d'opinion* in politics than the almost general use of the signature. This is, of course, a compliment to the personality of the pamphleteer, but it also serves another purpose. Curiously enough, the same consideration which establishes the rule of anonymity for leader-writers in England tells in favour of the signed article in France. In each case it is desired to give the reader confidence in the sincerity and political value of the opinion expressed. Anonymity gives prestige to the English leading-article as the considered opinion, not of an individual, but of a paper as an institution, recognised by the public as representing a point of view in politics. Except in particular cases like that of the *Temps*, the French reader is sceptical about anonymity; he knows the position of persons in the political landscape and fastens on them the responsibility for what they say.

It is doubtful whether anything could kill pamphleteer-

ing in France, but it is certain that the special conditions of Parliamentary life favour the *journal d'opinion*. During the four years of existence of the Chamber political interest is concentrated in Paris. Crises which occur, in certain periods with astonishing frequency, are all solved in Parliament itself. The political world of Paris is like a vast outer lobby seething with discussion. It is almost comparable with the "Town" in the London of Queen Anne. Intrigues of persons and vagaries of groups which bewilder the electorate are debated by expert onlookers as well as by the nine hundred Senators and Deputies who are taking part in the game. Here is a public for the *journal d'opinion*. It is a public which can be influenced directly and instantaneously. Every argument scores like the clever debating point of an orator speaking in a room. It may be doubted whether any other country can show a parallel to this regular and intimate discussion of the French Press of ideas. When no great topics present themselves the debate often degenerates into trivial gossip, but on occasion it reaches the height of admirably conducted and illuminating controversy. Day after day in the early months of 1929 the argument about the religious laws in which all the *journaux d'opinion* took part was in the richest vein of political dialectic. M. Léon Blum in the *Populaire*, "Senatus" in the *Avenir*, M. Jean Piot in the *Œuvre*, M. Herriot, M. François Albert, M. Henry de Kerillis and M. Lautier every day impressed and amused a public whose interest never flagged. Nor should it be supposed that these discussions are merely an intellectual diversion. They have an unquestionable effect on Parliamentary

opinion. A campaign conducted by a *journal d'opinion* not infrequently ends by bringing down a Government. If proof of the importance of this section of the Press were needed it could be found in the readiness with which nearly all politicians of note have recourse to it. M. Tardieu in 1922 hampered the Government of M. Poincaré not only by his speeches but by fiery denunciations in his *Echo National*. M. Barthou recently prepared his re-entry into active politics by a series of articles which left no doubt as to the direction in which he was moving. M. Painlevé periodically makes his opinion known in the same way. M. Poincaré's fortnightly contributions to a review in 1921 had such effect that after Cannes it was inevitable that he should be called to office. His appeal, it is true, reached the general public, but it undoubtedly had a direct effect, scarcely less important, on the Parliamentary world.

The very function of the *journaux d'opinion* gives them a representative character. They would not exist unless there were readers who shared their views, however interesting were the personalities of their directors. Even a Clemenceau must stand for something besides himself. In the sum, it may fairly be said that the *journaux d'opinion* afford more reliable indications of the political trend of France than the *journaux d'information*. The latter, in spite of their general circulation and their pretended independence, have a bias which is none the less real because it is concealed. The former are frankly prejudiced. Their position is known. Each of them taken alone would give a singularly inaccurate impression of the situation existing on the eve of a



general election. But taken altogether they are, on the contrary, remarkably illuminating. If the element of prejudice is subtracted, if allowance is made for calculable exaggeration in their estimates of electoral prospects, there remains a net indication of the highest value.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SOCIAL QUESTION

THE social question in France has a distinct character of its own. Superficially, it may seem to present the features which are to be observed in all the countries of Western Europe. Parliament concerns itself in the common fashion with such matters as the incidence of taxation on the working classes and passes National Insurance Bills and other measures equally familiar. There is a Socialist party duly affiliated to the Second International. There is a parallel trade union movement pursuing the normal objects of trade unions in the world of industry. But both these regular armies of the social movement fight and manœuvre in the presence of a vast agricultural community, democratically composed of peasants who own their own land. The existence of this mass of property owners, who have no natural leaning either towards Socialism or towards trade unionism, determines the peculiar character of the social question in France.

In 1846 not less than 76 per cent. of the total population of the country was engaged in agricultural pursuits. By 1911 the proportion had fallen to 56 per cent. and, with the continued development of manufacture, it is now 50 per cent., perhaps slightly less. There is thus almost an equal balance, so far as population is concerned, between the agricultural interest on the one hand and

the commercial and industrial interest on the other. Nor is there any likelihood that this economic balance will be rapidly upset. The only influences seriously affecting it are the post-war expansion of industry and the slow migration of rural workers to the towns. The former of these influences is not negligible. The recovery of Lorraine made France one of the great iron-producing countries of the world. Since the war, also, advantage has been taken of the reconstruction of the devastated regions to equip the industrial North with mining and manufacturing machinery which enormously increased its productive capacity. In spite of this new factor it is highly improbable that manufacture will be allowed to develop disproportionately at the expense of agriculture. France has not been hypnotised by the vision of an immense growth of industry which would turn the country into a "workshop of the world." She prefers to regard herself as an economic unity, reasonably self-sufficing. To the support of this general conception has come, in modern times, the recognition that she must be able to produce sufficient food-stuffs to nourish the great bulk of her population. Considerations of security in time of war, always a matter of primordial concern after 1870, tell heavily on the same side of the argument. Hence the tariff policy of 1892, which has been continued in principle ever since. French Protectionism has always been designed to assure, as one of the first necessities, an adequate production of food-stuffs.

The policy is not Utopian. France can, at a cost, be nearly self-sufficing. But the cost is considerable, and the very fact that it is willingly paid is proof of the value

placed on the object to be achieved. To produce anything like enough wheat for the whole population inferior land has to be cultivated, and the general price to be paid must necessarily be influenced by the cost of production of the wheat grown on the less fertile soils. The price which would satisfy the farmer in the Nord department, whose land yields 21 quintals or more per hectare, would not be enough to bring a profit to the small proprietor of the Lot or the Ardèche, whose crop is little more than 9 quintals per hectare. One result of this inequality is that, in spite of the deservedly high reputation of French agriculture and the untiring diligence of the peasants, the average output per hectare of all the main crops compares unfavourably with that of numerous other countries. The following table shows the average annual yield from 1913 to 1914 (in quintals per hectare) of various crops in several European countries :

Country.	Wheat.	Rye.	Barley.	Oats.
Belgium . . .	24·5	21·9	27·4	24·2
Great Britain . . .	21·8	18·3	19·2	18·4
Norway . . .	16·5	16·6	18·2	15·6
France . . .	13·5	10·7	13·4	12·6

After making allowances for other factors it is evident that the main explanation of the inferiority of the French figures, as compared with others, lies in the extensive cultivation of less suitable land in France. It must not be supposed that the inferiority is accepted by everybody as inevitable, as a necessary evil. Even among

French agriculturists three are men who think that the peasants and farmers, sheltered by the tariff, have become unenterprising and that crops could be vastly improved. Some would even like to see the tariff lowered to permit a bracing competition. But the die is cast. State policy is committed to high protection. Individual Ministers who try to be moderate in the matter are sometimes promptly made to see their error. When the new Tariff Bill of 1927 was brought before Parliament it provided, presumably after careful consideration, for a wheat duty of 25 francs per quintal, but the Chamber of Deputies at once increased the figure to 35 francs. In any dispute on the subject the last word is commonly spoken from the side of agriculture.

Since the war the financial position of the peasants has been positively strengthened. In 1920 and 1921, profiting by the high prices then ruling, immense numbers of them, all over the country, paid off the mortgages which burdened their little estates. So general was this liberation that the class of investors who used to place their money in such mortgages have recently found it difficult to do so. But the influence of the agriculturists in Parliament is above all due to their possession of a formidable voting power. There are at least  $4\frac{1}{2}$  million properties of less than fifteen acres each cultivated by peasant owners, and, including these, there are about 5,700,000 properties of which none is more than 75 acres in extent. The resulting electoral strength is gigantic. In dealing with agriculture, therefore, a French Government has not to think of an "agricultural interest" represented by a comparatively small body of large landowners with semi-dependent tenant farmers.

It has before it a great class of citizens, each possessing a vote, massed together by one common concern, and that fundamental.

It would thus be scarcely an exaggeration to say that France has two distinct sets of social problems, the urban and the rural. The peasants are interested in such matters as electrification, water supply and cost of transport more directly than they are concerned about the reorganisation of society. Most of them do not even pay income tax. There is a tax on agricultural profits, but its incidence is such that only about 231,000 of the 5,700,000 farming properties pay anything to the State under that head. In the towns, on the other hand, the social reformers direct their energies to obtaining housing measures, national insurance and democratic forms of taxation. Here, the Socialist party and the trade unions are on their proper ground. In the mining and manufacturing districts of the North, in particular, the configuration of parties and the activities of the trade unions are, on the whole, such as could be found in half a dozen other countries. It is difficult to ascertain even approximately the numerical strength of the trade unions, owing to the desire of each of them to give an impression that it is superior to its rivals, but it is certain that neither in total membership nor in pecuniary resources are they comparable with the British trade unions. An estimate published in 1923 gave the number of unions as 6196, with a total membership of about 1,770,000. And even if this figure be regarded as accurate, its real significance has to be discounted owing to its being divided among two or three independent sections. During a textile strike in the

North in 1931, the Minister of Labour had to negotiate with delegations of unions belonging to the Confederation Générale du Travail (C.G.T.), the "Constitutional" organisation and other delegations of the "Christian" or "Free" unions, while the Communist Confederation Générale du Travail Unitaire (C.G.T.U.) carried on a guerilla warfare on its own account. The C.G.T. has the best claim to be the orthodox representative of the labour movement, with its general organisation throughout the country, and its preference for negotiation as opposed to strikes corresponds fairly closely to modern tendencies of trade unionism elsewhere. The "Christian" unions are essentially Catholic organisations which stand formally aloof from the general movement. They have a considerable local strength in certain districts. There is no means of gauging the effective force of Communist trade unionism, which varies from month to month in accordance with the prevalence of discontent. The Communists appear to have obtained a hold on the workmen in certain industries—in the sardine factories of Douarnenez on the Breton coast, for example—but they are erratic in action, and their aim is rather to gain political advantage than to win concessions from employers. Even in the comparatively well-ordered action of the C.G.T., however, there are signs of a lack of discipline. In the textile strike of 1931, which was occasioned by the general dislike of workmen in a depressed industry to the paying of weekly dues under the new Insurance Act, the workmen themselves took the initiative, and it was only after the strike had begun that the C.G.T. supported their demand for a compensatory increase in wages.

There is, nevertheless, a general tendency in all industries and even among all classes of traders to organise themselves into regular associations. It is probable indeed that employers' associations of all kinds are nearly as numerous as workmen's unions. Many of them are forced into existence to defend professional interests not so much against the demands of their employees as against the more and more frequent intrusions of Government in their affairs. The formation of industrial cartels, moreover—particularly in the iron and steel industries—is rapidly expanding the area over which disciplined association is necessary on the side of employers as well as of workmen. The question of the control of the powerful forces which are thus being created is already engaging the attention of politicians—M. Caillaux, for instance, has written and spoken much on the subject—and it is likely that the question will before long be in the forefront of controversy. Meanwhile, certain big industrial organisations like the Comité des Forges are often credited with exercising all sorts of mysterious influence over Governments, political parties and newspapers.

Politically, the most important feature of the social movement in our time has been the rise of the Socialist party as a Parliamentary force. In the Chamber of 1928 it had a hundred members, and its success in a number of by-elections in the three following years created a widespread impression that it might well become the strongest party in the Chamber to be elected in 1932. This advance undoubtedly reflected the progress of public opinion on the social question, but it was also due, and perhaps in greater measure, to a widening in



the outlook and policy of the Socialist party itself. There have been indications, not as yet entirely convincing, that the Socialists were supplanting the Radicals in the affections of certain classes of the electorate to which they had formerly made little appeal. It is scarcely possible to explain this change by the hypothesis of a mass conversion to the doctrines of collectivism. It is more reasonable to suppose that the Socialists, unspoilt by office, have come to be regarded by certain minds as a more faithful advance guard than the "Governmental" Radicals, not so much on the social issue as in general politics. However that may be, it is certain that the Socialist party has modified its policy to encourage the impression that it is a party of reform, at least so far as its immediate programme is concerned, rather than a party of revolution. But the most significant move it has made is to bid for the support of the peasants. Until comparatively recent years the Socialist party was almost entirely urban. It originally came into existence among the industrial workmen of the big towns. The intellectuals who first preached its doctrines found their subject-matter in the relations between capital and labour in manufacture and trade. Their theories did not indeed exclude any form of human activity, but the preoccupation with industry was overwhelming. So long as the party remained a social revolutionary party preaching the pure doctrine of national ownership of the means of production it alarmed the peasantry. The social movement certainly spread outwards from several centres like Marseilles and Br  st, but the heart of the countryside was practically untouched. But the Socialists are now presenting themselves as little more

advanced than the Radicals, and are trying to remove from the minds of the peasants the fear of confiscation by assuring them that their small estates, worked by themselves, will be considered in the same light as the tools of the artisan, which nobody would propose to take away.

So far, there is not much evidence of the effects of this propaganda. It is true that in one or two by-elections the Socialists have scored rather surprising successes in constituencies not wholly urban. It must also be remembered that the countryside is not exclusively inhabited by peasant owners, and that there is a rural population of hired labourers of some numerical importance. According to the census of 1911 there were in agriculture 5,200,000 employers and 3,300,000 hired labourers. This latter figure, however, requires some rectification. A very large number of the labourers are sons of peasants who will one day inherit their fathers' property, and do not therefore belong essentially to the class to which the census assigns them. Still, the hired labourers are numerous enough to form a definite element whose interests are distinguished from those of the peasants. They have also genuine grievances, and at the worst are by far the least well-cared-for class in France. Their hours of work are often excessive, and their lodging is sometimes of the most miserable; it is not uncommon for them to be required to sleep in the cow-house. The existence of this class provides one opening by which the social movement is able to invade the countryside. Nor are trade unions entirely lacking. The workers in the vineyards of the Midi are organised. There have been strikes of *métayers*. The hired labourers

are not, however, concentrated enough to be effectively organised. The total membership of the unions does not amount to more than 30,000. Apart from the Midi wine region and the wheat and beet-growing districts round Paris, there are only a few scattered areas in which there exist large groups of workers who could properly be described as a proletariat, permanently wage-earning and having no prospect of one day becoming peasant proprietors. Over much the greater part of the country the peasants effectively constitute the population, and if the social movement is to spread widely over the rural districts, it is with the peasants that it must reckon. In modern politics it may almost be said that the most important question for France is that of the future orientation of the peasants. In one aspect they are the most Conservative part of the nation. Thrifty, to the verge of miserliness, rooted to their few acres, hoarding their money or buying more land or cattle with it, they are as nearly immobile as any social grouping can well be. Yet they are disconcertingly democratic, and the great bulk of them cannot fairly be assimilated in outlook or in standing to the bourgeois of the towns. It is probable also that they have been impressed by the growth of large industrial and commercial organisations, which are calculated to inspire fear in minds naturally sceptical and suspicious.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE CHURCH QUESTION

THE present relations between the Church and the Republic may be described as those of mutual and provisional tolerance. The Church officially recognises the Republic as the *de facto* régime and accepts in practice the main consequences of separation from the State. The Republic tolerates, in favour of the Church, some important derogations from the strict provisions of the *lois laïques*. Such relations cannot be permanent. Neither party believes that the great controversy is ended, or foresees the possibility of a settlement.

So far as the law is concerned, the position is clear enough. The Separation Act of 1905 denounced the Concordat negotiated by the Consulate a century before. The State broke off all connection with the Church. It abandoned its right to nominate Bishops. For the material conduct of Church affairs it prescribed the setting up of local *associations cultuelles*, which were to take over and manage property and to have authority to provide for the normal exercise of the cult. It was only through these associations that the State would have any dealings with the Church. Its relations with them would be similar to those which it maintained with other associations, such as trade unions. It would have nothing to do with their proper internal concerns, and would not interfere with their regular religious

activities. As for the existing Church buildings, they remained the property of the State or of the communes, but they would be lent rent-free and in perpetuity to the *associations cultuelles*. The State, in short, completely dissociated itself from the Church as a religious organisation, leaving it in that respect autonomous, and contented itself with providing for the disposal of property and constituting bodies to represent the legal interests of the Church and deal with the public authorities. In accordance with the general principle of neutrality in regard to religious beliefs the same rules were impartially applied to the Protestant and Jewish Churches.

Besides the Separation Act there are other *lois laïques* which complete the legislative system defining the relations between Church and State. The Law of July 1, 1901, which revised the legislation concerning associations of all kinds, prescribed a special régime for the religious *congrégations*. No *congrégation* could be formed unless authorised by a special Law regulating its functions; no new establishment of an existing *congrégation* could be founded except by State decree; the dissolution of a *congrégation* or the closing of an establishment could be ordered by decree of the Council of Ministers. By virtue of this Law of 1901, extended by a further enactment of 1904, no member of a *congrégation*, authorised or not, was allowed to direct, or teach in, any educational establishment. With regard to education, there existed already a considerable body of law which established the principle of State neutrality in religion and determined the status of private schools, including Roman Catholic schools. Religious teaching was excluded from the curricula of State elementary schools in

1882. The net effect of the legislation dealing with this matter is, however, that the opening of non-State educational institutions is permitted in every grade from the primary school to the University.

Such, in brief, is the law which governs in the various spheres the relations between Church and State. It is evident that the resulting system is not one which the Roman Catholic Church could willingly accept. The Separation Act has not, indeed, been formally and completely accepted. Although the great majority of the French Bishops and an influential section of the Catholic laity were in favour of setting up the *associations cultuelles*, the Pope, in a vehement Encyclical of 1906, refused his consent. They have never been instituted in the form prescribed and, by this default, the Church lost a good deal of pecuniary advantage which it would have enjoyed under the Law. By a sort of tolerance, however, the Separation Act is operative. In place of the *associations cultuelles* the Bishops have formed associations diocésaines, which a judgment of the Conseil d'Etat has declared to be legal, and the State has taken no direct action against these bodies. Nor has it been found impossible to raise the necessary funds for the exercise of public worship. Voluntary gifts by parishioners, collected by the priests under the title of the *denier du culte*, are placed in the hands of the Bishop and distributed by him. This arrangement is lawful under the general legal rules governing gifts, though it has nothing to do with the Separation Act. On the whole, the present position in regard to that Act is that disestablishment is unofficially accepted. The Church has lost in prestige but it has gained considerably in liberty. It is master

in its own house. The Pope appoints Bishops without the necessity of consulting the French Government. The faithful laity finds no difficulty in the practice of worship. It is another question whether the Vatican has really abandoned its hope of regaining its former position of an *imperium in imperio*.

With regard to *congrégations* the situation is curious. Immediately after the passing of the legislation which restricted their activities a number of these religious corporations emigrated, either because they did not seek legal authorisation or were unable to obtain it. During the war, in the favourable moral atmosphere of the *union sacrée*, several of them were allowed to re-enter France. They have remained, but have never been granted a legal status. By the ingenious device of dealing with the matter in two clauses of the Budget of 1928 M. Poincaré tried to regularise their position, chiefly on the ground that as missionary societies they served French interests abroad, but the proposal raised so violent a storm among the anti-clerical Radicals that it was dropped. But no step was taken to expel these orders, which still carry on their work on sufferance. Whatever may happen to the Separation Act, there is no doubt that the restrictions placed on the activities of the *congrégations* will continue to be a subject of contention between the Republic and the Church. At first sight the régime to which they are subjected would seem to depart from the essential liberalism which, after all, has inspired the religious legislation of the Republic. In particular, by forbidding these bodies to perform the work of education for which they were chiefly founded the Republic treated them as enemies within the gate. If

the history of the struggles of the 'eighties and 'nineties of last century be fairly read, however, there is some excuse for this hostility. The *congrégations* had certainly taken an active part in political and electoral conflict. They are militants of the Church in a sense in which the ordinary clergy are not. It was natural for the State to take the view that persons under a vow of obedience, bound by definition to certain special moral and intellectual principles, were not fitted for the capital social service of education. It is impossible, nevertheless, that the Church should accept the imposed disability. The present régime of partial tolerance keeps the quarrel latent, but, as M. Poincaré's experience showed, there is always a danger that the issue may become acute.

It is, however, on the general question of the liberty of education in the ordinary schools that the conflict between the Church and the Republic is most open and dangerous. The law as it stands is generous. Catholic institutions may be founded freely. There is, in fact, a very great number of Catholic schools, both elementary and secondary, and there are "Facultés Libres" in the universities. The table on the following page gives the number of elementary schools, public and private (the latter not necessarily Catholic but mainly so), existing in 1924 in several of the seventeen educational regions into which France is divided.

It will be noted that the proportion of public to private schools varies considerably. Much the most striking of the figures is the number of private schools in the Rennes region, which includes the greater part of the Catholic West. It may be assumed that more than one-third of



Region.	Public Elementary Schools.	Private Schools.
Dijon . . .	7404	1764
Bordeaux . . .	4255	615
Rennes . . .	4700	2602
Lille. . . .	6807	854
Caen . . . .	5493	746
Besancon . . .	2811	165

the elementary schools in this area are non-State Catholic schools. There are, moreover, many villages in the West in which nearly all girl pupils are sent to the Catholic school. A return published in 1907 showed that in that year eight villages in the Chateau-Gontier district of Mayenne sent 634 girls to the Catholic schools and only 70 to the State schools. In this and similar districts, that is to say, the village school is really the Catholic one. In the Maine-et-Loire department State schools only outnumber private schools by 741 to 505. Among secondary schools the proportion of Catholic institutions is much larger, chiefly because the State lycées charge fees for all pupils except those in the two lowest forms, whereas education in State elementary schools is free. These statistics give some indication of the importance of the interests of State and Church alike in the education question.

The battle for the schools was long ago engaged. Free education, which Ferry established in 1882, was a great blow to the Catholic elementary schools, but it proved by no means fatal. Where Catholic influence remains strong the Catholic school has been able to

survive and it has even been possible to organise almost a regular boycott of the State school. There is a movement within the Church itself to perfect the system of Catholic education in all its degrees. The provision of State schools in which no fees are paid is nevertheless a heavy handicap. Catholics complain that the theoretical liberty to build, equip and administer schools is not liberty in fact, so long as other schools are subsidised and their teachers paid by the State. The claim has been put forward by some of their advocates that they ought to receive out of the public money expended on education a share proportionate to the number of the nation's children whom they teach. Meanwhile, in the camp of their adversaries, a movement is on foot for the extension of the area over which education is free. This is the centre of immediate conflict. In the autumn of 1931 the sixth class in all secondary schools, the lowest class, was open to pupils gratuitously. In the intention of the Parliamentary majority which sanctioned it, this measure was a preliminary to the total abolition of fees in secondary schools. It was a further step on the road to the *école unique*—that is to say, to free education throughout the course from primary school to university. Catholics read this as a threat to stifle their institutions. While the principle of liberty is to be ostensibly maintained, it will, they argue, be more and more difficult to protect private schools against the competition of neighbours so richly endowed; the real purpose of those who are pressing for the *école unique* is to set up a State monopoly in education.

In face of the group of issues which make up the Church question the attitudes of the political parties are

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In face of the group of issues which make up the Church question the attitudes of the political parties are

characteristically confused. The position of the Radical-Socialists on one side and that of the Conservatives of the Republican Federation on the other are indeed clear. The Radicals continue to be inspired by the pure principle of the *état laïque*, of the State scrupulously respecting liberty of conscience, preserving complete impartiality towards all religious sects and, to that end, refusing to subsidise any one of them. They also have their share of the old anti-clericalism which regards the Church as an adversary of the Republic. This attitude squares admirably with the democratic policy of making education completely free, for if that object were achieved another blow would have been struck at Church influence. The Republican Federation fairly expresses the Catholic view. It has a horror of the "godless" school, whose neutrality it represents as a sort of sectarianism unjustly subsidised by the State. It asserts the indefeasible right of the head of a family, as a citizen, to choose the school to which he will send his children, without being penalised if he chooses the Catholic school. There is no reconciling these opposed points of view. If religious teaching were subsidised there would be, for the Radical, an end of State neutrality in religion and even an end of liberty of conscience. For the Catholics of the Republican Federation, on the other hand, religious teaching is one of the fundamental moral elements of education. But between these two poles of clear opinion there is ample room for the ambiguities which afflict French politics on major questions and such ambiguities are not wanting. In the first place, issues which thirty years ago had so sharp an edge have been blunted by the mere passage of time. "Clericalism ;

there is the enemy": the cry of Gambetta, which still rang like a tocsin at the beginning of the century, has not lost its meaning but it no longer thrills like an instant call to arms. A disestablished Church and a firmly-founded Republic have grown accustomed to living together. A certain inertia has been observable in classes of society and circles of opinion which used to be deeply stirred at every intrusion of the religious question. When M. Herriot in 1924 proposed to withdraw the Embassy from the Vatican, zealous partisans on either side were indeed roused. General de Castlenau, "at the request of ecclesiastical authority," promptly founded the National Catholic Federation to resist the "anti-religious aggression" of the Cartel des Gauches. But between the militant Catholics and the Radicals—themselves a little embarrassed on the occasion because they had the responsibility of government—the large body of Moderates, though many of them were anti-clerical in principle, were not deeply moved. They favoured the principle of letting sleeping dogs lie. It is impossible not to associate this comparative apathy with the progressive advance of party controversy from the old "political" questions to the social issue. For many Moderates it was of much more urgent importance to protect property and check the advance of Socialism than to take sides on the religious question. Some Social Conservatives, indeed, while entirely satisfied with the *lois laïques*, were not far from secretly desiring to encourage Catholicism as a barrier to the progress of advanced opinions. The Socialists, on their side, have never been enthusiastic in their support of anti-clericalism, not from lack of conviction but from a natural desire to

concentrate interest on the social question. There are, moreover, certain signs that the French clergy and laity are coming under the subtle influence of the social movement. The independence of the Celtic populations of the Côtes-du-Nord is manifesting itself increasingly in the election of Radicals and Socialists to Parliament in spite of clerical opposition. A still more interesting indication is the rise of the Popular Democratic party, which is entirely Catholic, but which refuses to be classed with the Conservative reactionaries on social questions. There are Bishops who are liberal-minded in such matters. In short, Church people in France, like the bulk of the political parties, are betraying tendencies towards new divisions, tendencies which will continue to be active as long as the distracting religious dispute is suspended.

In any examination of the various reactions of public opinion another factor must be taken into account. Popular education from which religious instruction is excluded has now been carried on for nearly half a century. For more than a generation a great part of the population has been withdrawn from one of the most potent forms of clerical influence. Although State neutrality, by definition, implies no antagonism to religion, the schools work in what may be described as an atmosphere of rationalism. Teachers themselves may be Catholics or Protestants or atheists, but they have not escaped from the conditions of their *ambiance*. It is a fact that large numbers of them are anti-clerical. The profession as a whole has drifted into the trade union movement. The public elementary school, in spite of its impartiality, is thus a subtle agent of anti-clericalism

among the people. Liberty of conscience has produced free-thinking in the restricted sense of the word. The number of sincere and practising Catholics has largely diminished, though in what precise proportion it is difficult to say. Thousands of persons who will have their children baptized, and who will see that members of their families shall be *munis des sacrements de l'Eglise* on their death-beds, make little more than this formal show of religious belief. Taine in his day calculated that four millions of the thirty-eight millions of Frenchmen were practising Catholics. A Bishop of Orleans many years ago numbered the truly faithful of his diocese as 37,000 out of 250,000 nominal Catholics. It is a matter of common observation in both urban and rural districts in many parts of the country that among those who go to Mass the women are many and the men few, and it is precisely this fact which has retarded the institution of woman suffrage in France; the Conservatives are in favour of the reform, but the advanced Republican parties are afraid of it, if not hostile to it. During the war there was a reaction against religious indifference and churches filled, but it is doubtful whether this sentimental reversion to tradition permanently increased the number of militant defenders of the Church.

While the incidence of the Church question on politics in general is thus changing, the reluctance of certain parties to reopen controversy does not imply indifference to the issue itself. In many cases, on the contrary, it implies rather a fear of the consequences if it were raised. For the fundamental fact remains that the Republic and the Church are not reconciled. Neither Catholic opinion nor representative Republican opinion



is ready for a loyal and lasting compromise on such definite matters as the status of the *congrégations* and the schools question. It is quite conceivable that certain *congrégations* at present unauthorised could obtain a regularisation of their position. The only reason why some of them have not obtained it is that they have not asked for it. But the full liberty claimed by the Church would hardly be granted by any Parliament likely to be elected in the near future, and the present régime of mere tolerance is no substitute for assured liberty. The question of the schools is almost certain to be before long a burning issue, since a proposal for the extension of free education to all the classes in the State *lycées* and *collèges* cannot long be delayed. And even if these particular questions were amicably settled there would still remain the conflict of principle, the dispute as to the position of the Church within the State. It is true that the supple modern policy of the Vatican is favourable to a *modus vivendi*. The principle of "acceptance of the civil power in the form in which it exists," first enunciated by Pope Leo XIII., has been reiterated by the present Pope. Nor is this in the least inconsistent with the traditional position of the Vatican ; the Church, though it may have preferences, has no final objection to any particular régime. But the policy is commonly regarded in France as diplomatic and opportunist. It is significant that the ban on the Royalist Action Française was welcomed by the social Conservatives as strengthening their electoral position. One interpretation of this move is that the Pope, by enabling Catholics to vote for Republican Conservatives, was really encouraging the formation of a party of resistance *within the Republic*.

Whatever may be the sense of the acceptance of the Republic as a régime, the Church has a quarrel with the Republic as being anti-clerical. And the Republic, for the majority of the Republicans, must be anti-clerical ; that is to say, it must preserve liberty of conscience, and to that end, while leaving the Churches complete freedom of worship, must not itself inculcate or favour any form of religious belief. There is the essential dispute.

CHAPTER XIII  
FOREIGN POLICY

THE true religion of France is France. Nobody who is not a Frenchman born can pretend to express its spiritual significance. It includes, but immeasurably surpasses, simple love of country. It is not consciously racial; the French are singularly free from race prejudice and readily incorporate in the nation elements drawn from the four corners of the world. It is an ideal sprung as much from thought as from feeling, a mingled sublimation of patriotism and culture. In a country which has torn the sceptre from the hands of King and Pope it is the one thing sacred. You may jest about the venerable religion which is still professed by half the nation, but to speak with hatred or malice of France is to commit an unpardonable sacrilege. Chansonniers and polemicists may assail French statesmen with a vituperation which in some other countries would arouse universal indignation, but the most virulent among them sees floating above him an immaculate image on which he will not lay a soiling finger. There is something Greek in this worship of France as a transcendent unity composed of a country sun-blessed above all others, a great family of forty millions and a philosophy of life. No foreigner can live long among this people without perceiving, like a chill in the bright air, the implicit sense of a unique civilisation, outside which live *οἱ βάρβαροι*.

This divine insularity governs the relations of France with the rest of the world. It does not forbid contacts ; on the contrary, the nation is eminently gregarious. Its culture is passionately humanistic. It is even missionary. *Faire aimer la France* is a positive aim. To that end, with the approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French schools are opened in Warsaw and Bucharest, in Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires, Catholic missions are encouraged, lecturers are despatched to the Universities of the United States, a *cité universitaire* is created in Paris, the Mecca. But while so much energy is expended in fostering affection for a country and a civilisation which have only to be known to be loved, there is less enthusiasm for the task of making other countries loved in France. A text-book of geography in regular use in the French elementary schools, after enumerating the virile qualities of the Anglo-Saxon, blandly refers to his reputed "egoism and rapacity." France is, in short, a vital centre from which light radiates generously over the world, but the source of the beneficence, the soul, must be preciously guarded from taint. Nothing characterises this self-centredness more clearly than the *naïveté* with which foreign countries and foreign public men are divided into "friends" and "enemies" of France. Lord Northcliffe and Mr. Myron Herrick, the late American Ambassador in Paris, were saluted as "grands amis de la France," without the slightest regard for the possible effect which the compliment might have on the reputation of these distinguished men in their own countries ; a French statesman on whom a foreign newspaper showered such praise would gain little in the esteem of his compatriots.

Yet this proud individualism should not be confounded with the spirit of tyranny at home or conquest abroad. The image which some people see of an overbearing, Roman-helmeted, sword-rattling France is false. The France of to-day is a France which has more than once seen the reverse of the medal of Napoleonism. The "nation of artists and soldiers" could be described with equal justice, perhaps with greater justice, as a nation of peasant farmers. It would be little use preaching Imperialism to that thrifty, democratic and unadventurous population, almost decimated by the war. A true portrait of France would represent her as self-reliant, prompt to defend her amour-propre and her prestige, sceptical, but ready to take her place in the family of nations and in any case shrinking from isolation. She would always speak with a curious consciousness of her own culture, of her distinctive mental outlook. In any conceivable discussion of international affairs the contribution of France would be *sui generis*, not merely because it would clearly state the interests of France, but because, as an intellectual conception, it would bear the unmistakable stamp of the *esprit français*. What can justly be said in criticism of France is that some of her most distinctive qualities are dangerous possessions. In times of strained relations between peoples amour-propre may become the self-will of an irritated Nationalism. And in the years immediately following the Armistice circumstances singularly favoured the dangerous development of self-will.

The foreign policy of France since the war may be divided into three periods: the first, stretching from the

Armistice to the evacuation of the Ruhr; the second, ending with the adoption of the Young Scheme; and the third, opening with the second economic collapse of Germany. In the years immediately following the Armistice everything conspired to drive France into an aggressive Nationalism. The country had emerged victoriously from a war in which it had been bled white. For the first time for half a century France could look the world in the face, unashamed, freed from the fear of the greatest military machine which the world had ever known, freed, too, from the vexatious necessity of courting doubtful allies without whose aid she had considered herself as doomed. This newly recovered consciousness of power soon found numerous occasions for manifesting itself. The Treaty of Versailles, which opinion in some other countries considered as inflicting too great hardship on Germany, was regarded by the French Nationalists who filled the Parliament of 1919 as not severe enough. In their eyes it had two capital defects: it did not make the Rhine virtually the military frontier; and, while it prescribed punishment for the non-payment of reparations by Germany, it did not provide efficient machinery for their payment. The second of these defects could be remedied, and to that end the effort of France was at once directed. But it soon became evident that the Treaty itself, and with it the European system which it had set up, were by no means secure beyond question. In the first place, the Treaty had been forced on Germany and had been signed under protest. Willing co-operation in its execution could not be expected from the vanquished Power, and in fact was not forthcoming. Secondly, it became

doubtful whether some of the new States which had been created—Poland and Austria, for instance—could economically survive, and their weakness threatened the European system. On both points the policy of French Nationalism could hardly hesitate. The Treaty fell short of French demands and must if possible be strengthened; at any rate it must be regarded as an irreducible minimum, not to be weakened by concessions, still less by revision. After being a critic of the Treaty, France therefore assumed the rôle of its chief defender. As for the new Europe, the system represented order, with whatever mistakes in conception, and an order which France was vitally interested in preserving. She stood relentlessly for the maintenance of the *status quo*. Extortion of reparations from Germany, the enforcement of the penal clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and the consolidation of the new territorial arrangement of Europe became the cardinal objects of French policy and so remained with one brief interval until the end of 1923.

Under the administration of M. Millerand, and later of M. Poincaré, the whole scheme of policy hung together, logically complete. It was the policy of the awakened France, moving freely, aware of her power. It placed the new Europe under French leadership. Everything was done that could be done to give the policy consistency and fortify it at all points. Although the term of compulsory military service was reduced to eighteen months, France kept on foot an army which was incomparably the largest in Europe. To defend the territorial system of the Treaties she surrounded herself with satellites, forming alliances with Poland and

Czecho-Slovakia, and an association with Jugo-Slavia which could easily be turned into a regular alliance. She used the Conference of Ambassadors, which met in Paris with a French delegate as ex-officio President, as a sort of court-martial to which recalcitrant Germany was periodically summoned to answer charges of dilatoriness in the matter of disarmament. The League of Nations, even a League of Nations without Germany, was slighted, as being an organ which, by its very composition, tended to substitute for the stern application of the treaties a more tolerant régime. The policy reached its culminating point in the occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923. M. Poincaré, who took this decisive action, declared that his object was to compel Germany to pay reparations. When, after the collapse of the mark, Stresemann, the German Foreign Minister, announced that "passive resistance" to the Ruhr occupation would be abandoned, there were many observers who thought that M. Poincaré had succeeded. The way was open for direct negotiation in which France would have an indisputable advantage. But the occupation had shaken Germany politically as well as financially. In the Rhineland forces of Separatists, of suspect origin, marched about proclaiming autonomy and, in the zones occupied by the French, expelled municipal authorities from town halls. Was M. Poincaré hypnotised by the notion of a Rhine frontier, or of a buffer State which would stand between Prussia and France? However that may be, he allowed the chance of direct negotiation to slip. Some months later he accepted an American suggestion which he had at first refused, and himself proposed the appointment of a



Committee of Experts to devise a reparation scheme on the basis of the capacity of Germany to pay.

Financial difficulties brought this phase of extreme Nationalism to an end. While successive accounts in "astronomical" figures were being presented to Germany, the cost of reparations was being paid in solid cash by France. The French Budget was divided into two parts, one dealing with ordinary expenditure and revenue and the other with reparations. But this second "budget of recoverable expenses," while leaving an ample space on the revenue side for the anticipated German payments, had to be balanced by internal short-term loans. For several years the repeated issues of Treasury Bonds were subscribed without apparent difficulty, but by the beginning of 1924 it became clear that the borrowing power of the State was seriously diminishing. The franc showed premonitory symptoms of collapse and M. Poincaré was constrained, a few weeks before the general election of May, to impose an additional 20 per cent. on practically all ordinary taxation. This emergency measure, while it postponed the financial crisis, was fatal to the policy of reparations by coercion. In vain M. Poincaré argued that his management of the mines of the Ruhr showed a profit for France. Electors judged the policy by the 20 per cent. increase in taxation which was its most visible result. The general election produced a chamber dominated by the Radicals and Socialists, who were for a policy of obtaining reparations by agreement with Germany rather than by extortion.

During the Nationalist ascendancy French policy had encountered not only the sullen resistance of Germany

but the steady discouragement of Great Britain, a necessary partner in the settlement of European affairs. Between France and her principal war ally there had occurred an estrangement of which the causes could be found as much in difference of temperament and of political method as in divergencies of interest. England's chief concern in Europe was peace, with all its accompaniments of political stability and active commerce. She had not, as France had, particular reasons of her own for alliances with one State or another. Consideration for the other great communities of the Empire prevented her from so entangling herself, even if she had had the wish to do so. By every kind of political and economic interest she was driven to oppose the policy of French Nationalism at every point. She disapproved the alliances which threatened to divide Europe once more into two camps. If she made a show of pressing Germany to keep her treaty engagements in regard to reparations or disarmament she did so rather to keep on terms with France than to serve her own interests in these matters. She was more concerned to set Germany on her feet economically than to exact the Treaty payments. Where France saw a recalcitrant debtor and a stricken foe only too inclined to nurse schemes of revenge, England saw a wealthy customer in distress. So long as points of view were so widely separated there was little chance of cordial action in common. And when, for a brief space, the Government of M. Briand made a sincere attempt to resolve the discord, temperamental disagreements came promptly to take the place of those of interest. The whole plan of the conferences of Cannes and Genoa revealed the

profound differences, not simply in regard to particular interest, but between the French and British conceptions of political method. The British mind turns naturally to empirical solutions in affairs ; it is content to achieve a practical result, however partial, leaving the problem as a whole in suspense, to be dealt with piecemeal as its various parts come into the field of urgency. The French mentality shrinks from this untidiness as Nature abhors a vacuum. It is not at its ease unless it sees a logical whole, clearly conceived in all its parts. The various detailed problems may be arranged in order of precedence, but they should together form a unity, and each should be considered in relation with the complete plan which is the ultimate goal. The Genoa Conference was a remarkable example of the British method. Mr. Lloyd George's idea in calling it seems to have been the quite simple one of getting all the Governments of Europe together, including the Bolsheviks, and "seeing what came of it." M. Briand who is a Celt, was capable of taking part in a vast conversation of that kind, but he was no longer in office and had been replaced by the formidable M. Poincaré, a French formalist of the sternest school. To the French the polyglot assembly at Genoa was more a Parliament than a Conference, an inchoate Parliament aimlessly wandering round the European problem, capable of taking up this or that end of it and coming haphazard to drastic decisions whose general import could not be seen. Even if M. Poincaré had not already been contemplating the Ruhr occupation the Genoa Conference would have failed because its method was incomprehensible to one of the chief parties.

The second period of French post-war policy, which opened with the accession to office of the Radical Government of M. Herriot in June 1924, marked a decisive change in spirit. The two immediate objects of the new Ministry were an understanding with Great Britain and a reparation agreement based on the free consent of Germany. Almost the first act of M. Herriot was to visit the British Prime Minister and arrange the London Conference. At that Conference, for the first time since the war, French and German Ministers sat round the same table as equals. The Dawes Plan, which placed reparation payments on a regular basis, came into operation in September and the evacuation of the Ruhr was agreed upon. In the autumn M. Herriot emphasised the change which had come over French policy by personally attending the meeting of the League of Nations Assembly. M. Briand became the chief French delegate to the League Council. These striking moves, so rapidly accomplished, made a profound impression on opinion all over the world. At no moment, either before or since, did optimism seem to be better justified. M. Herriot, in fact, gave France another countenance. A humanist steeped in the classical tradition, he represented the France which had interpreted Latin civilisation for Western Europe. His mind had the authentic qualities of the *esprit français*. But he represented not less faithfully the France of the Revolution, of the Revolution in its generous spring-time of Jacobin ideals. Behind him were ranged three groupings. There were the Socialists, by definition favourable to international arrangements for the avoidance of war. There were the bourgeois Liberals.

Above all, he represented the instinctive, unadventurous pacifism of the peasants. Few statesmen ever inaugurated a large change of foreign policy under more favourable auspices, international and domestic.

M. Herriot's plan was characteristically French in its clarity of conception and amplitude of design. He found a striking formula to cover it. For some months Europe listened with almost as much hope as scepticism to the appeal for "arbitration, security, disarmament." With disconcerting rapidity, and in spite of the recent abandonment of the draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance, M. Herriot advanced to a general scheme for the organisation of peace, or, more properly, for the settlement of the international disputes, by the agency of the League of Nations. The Geneva Protocol, approved by the League of Nations on October 2, 1924, was by far the most ambitious project of its kind which the world has ever seen. It proposed a method by which the League, entrusted by its Covenant with the regulation of quarrels among its members which threatened to end in war, should organise its action. The machinery was in appearance simple. The League Council, seized with the question, was to attempt conciliation. Failing settlement by that means it was to invite each of the Governments which were parties to the conflict to accept arbitration. If either Government refused arbitration, or rejected the decision of the arbiters, or ignored the League Council's proposal for an armistice, it was to be considered as having deliberately chosen to be an enemy of the public peace. There was thus provided a definition of aggression; the aggressor in war was a Government which had refused to submit its case to

arbitration. Such a Government was to be treated by the League as an offender against international law and restrained by force. The League was to call upon its members to contribute, by supplies of troops, money and munitions, or by economic and financial pressure, to the League's military action against the public enemy.

It is impossible to withhold admiration for the intrepidity of this plan. No great State has ever put forward a scheme of international organisation in which it volunteered to undertake responsibilities and risks comparable with those which France was ready to run. But the scheme, which had received the formal approval of the League, was not destined to go further on the road towards realisation. A change of Government in Great Britain turned one important supporter into an adversary. Even if that untoward event had not occurred, however, the success of the plan was endangered by its inherent defects. There were countries of the first importance like Germany, Russia and the United States which were not members of the League. If the scheme passed, members of the League would be committed, while these other countries remained free. There were, moreover, regions of the world obviously more exposed to the danger of war than others, so that certain States were much more likely to be called upon to undertake military operations on behalf of others than in their own defence. Canada, for instance, who could have few occasions for quarrel with other countries, could hardly be expected to be ready to pledge her resources in some petty Balkan dispute, which her own people would never understand either in its nature or in its possible bearing on their own interest. Doubt began

to be thrown, also, on the practical value of the admirable French logic which had defined the aggressor. In the hurry of a crisis motives of honour and calculations of advantage alike often drive States into positions which they find it hard to justify and from which it is equally difficult to withdraw. History furnished many examples of apparent aggressions which might be represented as acts of defence. The opinion used to be commonly held in France, for instance, that Bismarck really provoked the war of 1870, although the formal declaration came from Napoleon III. Yet it may be doubted whether at the time France would have been willing to submit the dispute to arbitration, and if she had refused she would have been the aggressor under the terms of the Geneva Protocol.

The fundamental vice of the Geneva Protocol was that it was only appropriate to a stable international order already existing, whereas the foundations of the system established by the Treaty of Versailles were notoriously not firm. It required as an essential preliminary condition that peace should be reasonably assured. It was that peace should be really a scheme for a world in which war was a minor and measurable contingency, and in which the repression of a possible offender would call for only limited effort on the part of the guardians of the new international law. But M. Herriot's scheme was launched at a time when most European countries, and not least France herself, were living in dread of what the future might bring forth. It was as if it were proposed to start a health insurance scheme in a community singularly liable to an epidemic from which half the population

might be suffering simultaneously. In the existing conditions a pledge given by any country to take action against an aggressor had an alarming resemblance to an undertaking to engage in a possible war which would call into play its full resources. A scheme to prevent war might end in war. The one risk against which it did not provide was the risk of its own collapse. M. Herriot, it is true, actually pressed his plan on the very ground that, even if war were not immediately apprehended, there were numerous causes for anxiety as to the future. But in asking the nations to sign the Geneva Protocol, he was not inviting them to enter into a business contract whose liabilities could be fairly foreseen; he was asking them to perform an act of faith.

It has been argued that in putting forward the Geneva Protocol France was ingeniously serving her own interests. Both the draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance and the Protocol were designed in part to satisfy the special claim of France for security, in compensation for the failure of the United States and Great Britain to implement their promise of military guarantees to France in the event of her being attacked. France desired the world to be static. She wanted to stabilise the Europe of the Treaty of Versailles. There was no danger that she would be an aggressor State, since she was satisfied with the spoils of victory. If aggression occurred it would come from the defeated and discontented Powers. Whatever value may be placed on this reasoning it does less than justice to the motives of M. Herriot. France accepted, unreservedly, the obligations which some other Governments considered to be



so onerous. The Protocol represented a generous initiative.

France, at any rate, had now turned her face definitely towards the League of Nations. There was no longer any question of neglect of that formerly slighted organisation. M. Briand, the Briand of Cannes, had entered on the most striking phase of his long career. French policy, if disappointed in its grand design, was not reversed. For the logical completeness and universality of the Protocol was substituted the notion of limited regional agreements, of which the first was destined to be signed a year later at Locarno. Essentially, this policy, in which Great Britain was an active participant, proceeded on the British principle of dealing with a problem piecemeal. Locarno did not pretend to stabilise Europe. It met the most urgent and obvious need. It was the first step towards a political understanding between France and Germany. Locarno did not indeed fulfil all the hopes of its promoters. It was not a precedent for a series of similar local agreements intended to bring peace to all the disturbed areas of Europe in turn. Even in so far as France and Germany were alone concerned it did not bring in its train all the results which had been hoped for, and which Stresemann and M. Briand had projected in a famous conversation at Thoiry. But it enabled Germany to enter the League of Nations. It facilitated the agreement for the evacuation of Rhineland. Since Locarno, Franco-German conversations have never been really broken off.

Amid the disillusion which succeeded the too rosy optimism of Locarno the behaviour of France in many quarters gave rise to renewed suspicion as to the sincerity

of her pacifism. Her attitude in regard to disarmament, her ungracious hesitation in carrying out the promised evacuation of Rhineland, her activity in naval ship-building and in constructing new fortifications on the eastern frontier seemed inconsistent with faith in the policy of international understanding. Hostile critics accused her of aiming at the hegemony of Europe, and added to her potential effectives those of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Jugo-Slavia to arrive at an imposing estimate of the forces which France could command for the next war. She was in fact riding two horses, one foot on the policy of *rapprochement* and the other on that of self-assured security. She had obtained the valuable British guarantee at Locarno, but she kept her alliances. In the complex of motives which at this time influenced French action, Nationalism of the Poincarist type must be given a place. But the reiterated demand for security, which rang hollow in unsympathetic ears abroad, was sincere. In maintaining armaments and alliances France was pursuing a policy which she described as one of prudence, but which might with equal accuracy be called one of fear. She was alarmed by the violent Nationalist upheaval in Germany, which her own Nationalists had helped to provoke. She had, moreover, particular and material reasons for anxiety. The war had reduced her man-power in two ways: it had had the primary effect of diminishing her male population by 1,300,000; it had had the secondary effect of gravely diminishing the annual number of births during the war years. This secondary effect was due to attain its full force in the years 1931-35, when the war-born children would reach military age. In those years the annual

contingent of effectives produced by conscription would fall considerably below the normal 240,000, and in one year would not be as much as half that number. This sudden prospective slump in man-power, though it was rarely mentioned, was undoubtedly at the back of the minds of French statesmen whenever the question of armaments was discussed. In such circumstances the election of Hindenburg as President of the German Republic, and the progress of extreme Nationalist organisations like that of the "Steel Helmet," had an exaggerated effect in stimulating the distrust of the most sceptical race in Europe. With Latin feminine instinct France attributed to Germany deep designs of revenge.

If, however, France was pursuing two policies which in the long run were inconsistent, there was no doubt as to her fundamental preference for the policy of international understanding. She would rather seek security through concerted measures with other countries than rely on herself and her satellites. In the first place, she could have no illusions about the military value of her alliances. In the shifting disorder of Europe not the most far-seeing statesmen could conceive the conditions in which a future war would be fought, or be sure on which side a particular country would be compelled to place itself. Secondly, every fresh step towards the general organisation of Europe diminished the importance of separate alliances. The Locarno agreements, for instance, made the Franco-Czecho-Slovakian alliance of decidedly less consequence than it had hitherto been. But the predominant concern of France was to obtain security. If one line of policy did not lead to the goal,

she must take the alternative way. And by security France meant, quite simply and realistically, military security. Much surprise was expressed, particularly in England, at the fact that the conclusion of the Locarno agreements apparently did little to abate this demand. But the Locarno agreements were not regarded as providing military security. There was a British guarantee of the eastern frontier, but the guarantee was impartial. And there was no definition of the nature or extent of British military aid in the event of an aggression. Locarno brought a moral reassurance, but it did not alter the material conditions. It diminished the risk of war, but if war occurred, the aggressive force which France might have to face and the force she would have to oppose to it were, on a cold calculation, unchanged. The same implacable realism, so often irritating to opinion in other countries, characterised every proposal of the *Quai d'Orsay*, and every comment on the proposals of others, with regard to security and disarmament.

But French policy was not dictated by simple realism and self-interest. Its most distinctive quality lay in its method. As a method, the transactions which led to the Locarno agreements represented a concession to British notions. Inevitably, French initiative reverted to the inspiration of its native genius. It turned once more to large and general solutions, informed with logic in their minutest details. For the limitation of armaments the *Quai d'Orsay* produced a network of schemes so consistent and interdependent that no part could be dealt with separately from the rest. The military defence of a country was conceived as an indivisible whole. Land armies could not be discussed apart from naval

forces, or naval forces apart from air forces. Every factor which determined the security of a country, and therefore its need for armaments of one kind and another, was solemnly taken into account. Geographical position, population, the strategic character of land frontiers, length of coastline, distance and position of colonies, assurance of sea communications, potential resources for the manufacture of munitions: this formidable inventory was to precede and govern the discussion of every proposal relating to disarmament. The plan was admirably complete, but its very perfection threw into despair Ministers of other countries who were hot for results. Some were not far from believing that France was multiplying complications simply in order to avoid any effective reduction in armaments. It is certain that France had reasons of her own for deprecating the separate discussion of naval questions. During the war, when she relied on the British Fleet, and indeed for some time before the war, she had allowed her shipbuilding programme to dwindle. As a consequence of this suspended activity she entered every naval conference at a manifest disadvantage, since there was always a tendency in such negotiations to take the existing strength of fleets as a starting-point. The Washington Conference, which fixed the proportions of capital ships of five Powers, left France with a humiliating impression that she had been duped. It seemed as if an attempt were being made to perpetuate her *de facto* inferiority. But it would be going far beyond the mark to suppose that the whole French thesis on security was set up as an insurmountable barrier against disarmament. The French could fairly point out that their

scheme was not designed for the benefit of France alone, that the rules by which it proposed to fix a scale of armaments were to apply to all countries, and that all countries would enjoy the benefit of the same standard of security. The truth is that, here again, there was a conflict between Anglo-Saxon empiricism and the French insistence on logical completeness. The French in effect argued that by dealing with one kind of armament at a time you were merely producing makeshift and temporary solutions which might prejudice the complete plan of disarmament. The British and Americans acted on the view that the limitation of battleships, cruisers and submarines was so much advance on the road to disarmament, that no absolute standard could be evolved from the mass of factors which the French wished to take into account, and that search for the ideal might end by everybody straying from the road of disarmament altogether.

While the Anglo-Saxon world was exasperated by arid French logic, the French were not less irritated by Anglo-Saxon "ideology." They listened with a profound and ineradicable scepticism to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's exhortations to the nations to place their reliance on moral influences rather than on the force of arms. They were not impressed by the argument that if there were fewer guns in the world there would be less chance of their going off. In spite of M. Briand's perorations the French did not really set a high value on the Kellogg Pact. The signature of that instrument by so many Governments was doubtless a pleasing sentimental gesture, however circumscribed in practical effect by the very natural reservations which accom-

panied it. But the absence of any provision for the punishment of the wrong-doer who should break his word was, in French eyes, a fatal flaw. It may seem strange that the French should have so little enthusiasm for a Treaty which was due, in a way, to the initiative of M. Briand. But the Pact as Mr. Kellogg conceived it was far from being the Pact proposed by M. Briand. M. Briand's original idea, launched almost casually, was that since war between France and the United States was so unlikely as to be virtually impossible the two countries might solemnly register the fact in a simple joint declaration. When Mr. Kellogg proposed to extend the Pact to countries between which war was not inconceivable the Quai d'Orsay was in a state of almost comic alarm. The American plan would either stir up too many problems or it would produce one of those windy, voluminous moral manifestoes in which the French see little meaning and less efficacy. There are some people in France who think that what they finally got was the manifesto.

The world economic crisis, which reached catastrophic force in 1931, marked the beginning of a new epoch in international politics. No country was spared its ravages. Everywhere trade languished. The very foundations of international credit were undermined. Within the space of two years America plunged from the height of prosperity to a depth of depression such as she had never known. The pound sterling, painfully and proudly raised to parity in 1925, was once more dethroned and the gold standard had to be abandoned. In face of a calamity so universal every country had to reconsider its foreign policy. The effects of the crisis on French

policy, which still centred in the question of Franco-German relations, were strikingly diverse. Among European countries, Germany was the most affected by the financial disaster, France the least. While the mark was once more tottering, the franc, stabilised as much by chance as by prudence at a safe level, was the steadiest currency in the world. While Germany had four or five millions of unemployed, France had scarcely more than half a million. It was not unnatural that the first effect of new developments should have been a recrudescence of French Nationalism. Germany had recently been giving increasing cause for suspicion to a jealous and apprehensive neighbour. Amid the anarchical movements which had swept over her distracted population she seemed in danger of becoming a prey either to Communism or to Hitlerian Nationalism. In French eyes the second of these risks was infinitely the graver. In its foreign policy the German Government, while not openly disavowing Stresemann, seemed to be chiefly concerned to conciliate the Nationalists. The affair of the new "pocket" battleships, constructed though they were strictly in accordance with Treaty obligations, aroused suspicion as to the real trend of German policy. The announcement of the project for an Austro-German customs union caused instant and genuine alarm on the other side of the Rhine. Nationalism called to Nationalism. Even M. Herriot was moved to passionate protest and now spoke in terms which betrayed the deepest distrust of German aims. Franco-German relations were still suffering from the repercussions of these events at the moment when the crisis caused by the threatened collapse of German finance suddenly placed France in



a position of unexpected power. Mr. Hoover's proposal to relieve Germany by a moratorium applicable equally to reparations and war debts would at no time have been accepted by France without reserve, since it threatened to make a breach in the system of reparation payments so laboriously set up, but conditions were now insisted upon with significant vigour. The plan was agreed to only after arduous negotiation, and with a stipulation formally preserving the principle of continuity of reparation payments under the Young Scheme. And when the British Government called a conference in London to discuss further measures to deal with the situation created by the German crisis, France promptly showed her determination to use her newly acquired power. Such a conference, in the French view, might well lead to negotiations extending far beyond the bounds of the immediate problem. There were rumours that it was intended, for instance, to discuss disarmament. France had no desire to risk such a debate, particularly under what she considered to be Anglo-American auspices. The French Cabinet countered promptly by a singularly audacious move. Neglecting for the moment to reply to the British invitation, M. Laval, the Prime Minister, suggested that the German Chancellor and Foreign Secretary should pay their long-contemplated visit to Paris. The manœuvre had a double object. In the first place, it transferred the initiative to French hands. Secondly, it provided an opportunity for direct preliminary negotiation with Germany. In the course of such a *tête-à-tête* discussion conditions might be posed and accepted which other Governments could hardly refuse to endorse. The French proposal was on a scale

worthy of the occasion. Germany was offered a very large long-term loan, in advancing which other Governments were expected to participate. So far as the French were concerned, however, the offer was subject to certain political conditions of the highest importance, among them, presumably, a guarantee that the project of an Austro-German customs union would be abandoned. It was intended to restrain Germany's freedom of action in international affairs. It was hoped to gain at one blow most of the advantages which French diplomacy had been working in vain to obtain. The attempt failed because it was made clear that no German Government which accepted such terms could live for a day. But M. Laval's manœuvre succeeded in one of its aims. France was able to insist that the London Conference, to which such ambitious designs had been attributed, should be strictly limited to the consideration of the immediate financial crisis and should not stray into wider problems.

If the first effect of the financial crisis on French policy was to cause a recrudescence of Nationalism it soon became apparent that no narrow view of national interest could determine the policy of any country. The crisis threatened the whole economy of the western world. Not the most favoured country could find salvation by simple reliance on its own resources. The same invincible argument which had forced the United States to abandon the rôle of the stern creditor of Europe convinced all Governments alike of the necessity of common and urgent action. M. Laval could not follow the advice of extreme Nationalists and adopt a policy of inertia and isolation. His acceptance of Mr. Hoover's

invitation to visit Washington marked a very definite return to a policy of co-operation. But the co-operation was to be offered on new terms. France was still to gain as much profit as she could from her superiority over her partners in the negotiation. The price of her help was to be as high a guarantee as she could obtain for her security. The game was risky, for failure would leave the Powers still face to face with the great unsolved problems of disarmament, reparations and finance. M. Laval's choice of the policy had at least the effect of demonstrating the seriousness of the French claim to security.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE COLONIES

IN any examination of French Colonial policy two important facts must be borne in mind. First, the French Empire of to-day is almost entirely modern. In 1870 its total area was 900,000 square kilometres, its population 2,800,000; its area has now expanded to more than 10,000,000 square kilometres, and its population to 55,000,000. Secondly, the great bulk of the Empire is made up of what used to be called *colonies d'exploitation*: that is to say, its population is almost wholly native and the French inhabitants are either Government officials, agents of commercial enterprises, or managers of industrial undertakings for which the labour is supplied from native resources. The French Colonies therefore correspond to the British Crown Colonies. There is not one of any importance which is colonised by Europeans forming a community virtually self-governing like the Dominion of Canada or the Commonwealth of Australia. In the whole Empire the number of French residents liable to military service on the outbreak of war in 1914 was only 4000.

It is a necessary result of these conditions that French Colonial policy is in part inherited from the old system of simple economic exploitation for the benefit of France, and in part inspired by the more liberal ideas of to-day, which take account of the rights of native

populations to their own customs and culture and to a share in the advantages of development under European auspices. While the ruling principle was that of the *Patte Colonial* the colony was considered above all as a market for French goods and a source of raw material for French manufactures. The trade regulations imposed on the colonies were as sternly selfish as the British Navigation Laws. The internal administration of the "possession" displayed just as much consideration for the population as was necessary to avoid provoking dangerous discontent. Commercial competition with the "mother" country was out of the question. No manufacture, however appropriate to the native genius, however favoured by the existence of suitable natural resources, was permitted to come into conflict with the industrial interests of France. From the extreme egoism of the *Patte Colonial* modern French policy has emancipated itself, but it has not reached the full recognition of the right of Colonies to compete in trade. The customs laws are still used as a drastic means of economic restriction.

On its political side the *Patte Colonial* has been definitely abandoned for the incomparably more liberal policy of "association." The governing body recognises that it is dealing with a race having the right to live its own life, to have the means of educating itself and, within certain limits, to take a part in public administration. In certain colonies like Indo-China, and in the Protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia, where an old civilisation still exists, the policy of association has taken more or less definite shape. It has in any case established itself as the orthodox policy and no

Minister is likely to depart from it in principle. Curiously enough, this progress towards liberalism is not attributable, except in a minor degree, to the application of the Republican principles of the rights of man. It is due to two main causes. In the first place, the quite genuine freedom of the French mentality from the vulgar form of race prejudice facilitates social contacts between the governing and the governed communities. In India the division between the British residents and the native population has the character of a rigid distinction of caste. The French in Indo-China, while by no means merging their social life in that of the population, do not set themselves apart in the same decisive way. The second cause of the modern liberalism is the action of an *élite* of administrators of singularly high capacity.

While the French, except in Canada in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, have shown little sustained capacity for the true colonisation which consists in the emigration of large bodies of settlers, they have always been singularly rich in adventurous spirits who have been not merely explorers but men of high political aims. Sometimes, by good luck, these intrepid travellers became administrators. Champlain, for instance, founded Quebec. Dupleix gave Clive his first lessons in the policy which made him famous. Other adventurers were less fortunate in their politics. If French colonists had followed Cavalier de la Salle down the Mississippi the history of North America might have been strangely different. Some of the best work in colonial development in modern times has been done by soldiers who were also statesmen, exceptional persons who conceived their own policies and who certainly

owed little either to their military chiefs or to Ministers in Paris. Bugeaud in Algeria summarised his policy in a motto: "By the sword and by the plough." Colonel Faidherbe organised Senegal economically as well as militarily against constant opposition from Paris. In Tonkin, Galliéni, quite of his own initiative, used his army not merely as a repressive force but as a constructive agent, setting up civil administration and facilitating trade and agriculture as he went along. The greatest of this modern series of personal achievements was the pacific conquest of Morocco by Marshal Lyautey. Between the war operations of 1912, necessitated by the universal disorder, and the invasion of Abd-el-Krim in 1925, there stretched a period of thirteen years during which the frontiers of the occupied and pacified territory were gradually advanced with so little of the usual noise of war that the world at large was scarcely aware that important events were happening. It was the method of Galliéni practised on a great scale and perfected by an administrative genius of the first order. Many a conquest which is known to history because it was marked by resounding military explosions has been incomparably less worthy of note.

French writers, with these administrators in mind, have often remarked that the modern Empire has been built up with little help from Governments at home, if not actually in spite of them. It is true that several of the Proconsuls did their best to escape from control. Lyautey's independence was notorious. Favoured by the circumstance that Morocco, as a Protectorate, was placed under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and not the Ministry of Colonies, he pretended to an almost

complete freedom, shaping his administration and choosing his assistants pretty much as he pleased. But even in the normal case where Governors of Colonies are regularly ordered and advised by the Ministry in Paris, Colonial affairs are a very minor affair in Parliamentary business unless, by some outbreak of disorder or by complications threatening war, they force themselves on public attention. The Republicans of the 'seventies and 'eighties of last century were for the most part positively hostile to what they regarded as a policy of adventure. They tolerated an active Colonial policy so long as it did not intrude itself unpleasantly on their notice, but any check which seemed likely to be followed up by a call for men and money was resented bitterly. On two occasions Jules Ferry, who deserves to be regarded as the pioneer in modern Empire-building, was driven from office owing to comparatively trivial military reverses in Colonial wars. At that time Radicals of the stamp of Clemenceau deprecated a policy of expansion on general principles. Such an attitude of wilful detachment would not be possible now. The recognition of the interdependence of all parts of the world, which is one of the outstanding political facts of our time, has thrown into relief the importance of colonies, and the lesson of that general discovery was made particularly emphatic for Frenchmen by the direct aid received from the North African Protectorates during the war. There is no longer indifference either among Parliamentarians or in the nation at large. Nothing could be more significant of the change of view than the fact that a Socialist, M. Alexandre Varenne, served for several years as Governor-General of Indo-China. Interest in



Colonial problems is not now confined to the comparatively small, well-informed and highly intelligent circle of specialists, which used to form in some sort of clique, little known to the public, but exercising considerable influence on occasion over Ministers.

In presence of these new interests, and having regard to the Nationalist movements which are sweeping through the East, the future of the "policy of association" has become a matter of vital consequence. It is possible that France may be challenged, as Great Britain is challenged in India, to define in clear terms the liberalism which she professes in regard to her relations with native peoples of her Colonies. "Association" may mean many different things. In Morocco, Marshal Lyautey has given it one interesting interpretation. He has restored the spectacular majesty of the Sultan. He has set up a native civil service which co-operates with that of the French in the central organs of government, though the final authority lies with the Protecting Power. He has preserved the Moorish law for certain native cases, and has helped to revive Mussulman learning and art. But there is no indication that this form of association is a provisional tutorship intended to lead step by step to autonomy or independence. In Indo-China, M. Alexandre Varenne encouraged the national aspirations of the natives in such a way as to suggest that France might eventually go far on the road to autonomy. Perhaps the balance of French opinion is represented by M. Albert Sarraut, who has been successively a Governor-General and Minister of Colonies, and who in the latter capacity drew up a vast scheme of development applicable to the whole Empire save the

Protectorates. In his hands the "policy of association" becomes a régime of liberalism whose extreme limits vary according to the case, but do not approach native autonomy. He would make it an object of policy to form native *élites*, for whose benefit he would make the rules concerning naturalisation more generous, and whom he would admit as members of local assemblies and as administrators alongside French colleagues in proportion as their fitness developed and their numbers increased. The general mass of the native populations should be allowed to live according to their traditions. They should be given an education, in French, before everything else utilitarian, though facilities should be reserved for higher instruction where the capacity to profit by it is demonstrated. The association contemplated by M. Sarraut is, in short, that of *protecteur* and *protégé*. Less liberal than some other Powers in framing Constitutions for her Colonies, France makes up for this deficiency by a more cordial treatment of the native as a member of the same family, allowing no race bar to interfere with social intercourse. From these varied interpretations of the policy of association certain conclusions may fairly be drawn. First, the whole *ambiance* of the Colonies is conceived of as necessarily and unalterably French. Secondly, the association is never likely to assume a federal character. On these two principles policy will probably continue to stand, so far as it is possible to see into the future through the gathering mists of our time. The accepted French conception of a Colony does not admit of negotiation on equal terms with a Gandhi, and the right of free speech would never be conceded to the extent of allowing the leader of a home rule movement to

tour the mother-country. As for a Round-Table Conference, France has never been able to adopt Federalism in any period of her history. The idea of unity, the unity of a family, is the very breath of her being.

In spite of the general acceptance of the policy of association, France has not yet succeeded in ridding herself of some of the illiberal traditions and practices of the old, selfish régime. There is still too much "government from Paris." Governors-General have not enough initiative. But the most conspicuous traces of the policy of exploitation are to be found in the Customs Law as applied to the Colonies. This is a matter of such great importance that it deserves consideration in some detail. The basis of the present system was the Tariff Law of 1892, the underlying principle of which was the assimilation of the Colonies with the mother-country for Customs purposes, as far as that might be possible. It should be said, in fairness to the legislators of that day, that they shrank from the full application of their theory of "assimilation." They divided the Colonies into two groups. The first, which now includes Indo-China, Madagascar, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane and Réunion, was to have free trade with France in both directions, but the French home tariff was to be applied to goods imported by the Colonies from foreign countries. Colonies of the second group, consisting of the French West African territories, Tahiti and the Indian establishments, were given special tariffs of their own, but their exports to France were to meet the French minimum tariff. The second group was thus treated more liberally than the first. It was excepted from the scheme of assimilation, either because of the

geographical situation of the Colonies composing it or because international treaties prevented the simple application of the French tariff. It should be added also that the legislators foresaw the difficulties which might arise from the rigidity of the régime imposed on the first group, and provided for modifications of the French tariff duties in the cases of particular Colonies, where the disadvantage or injustice of the theoretical system could be demonstrated. The intention of the legislators, however, was undoubtedly to lead up to a system of complete "assimilation"; all the Colonies were ultimately to be surrounded by the French home tariff. This ultimate aim has not been achieved. After nearly forty years the "free" Colonies of the second group remain free, and Gabon (West Africa) and New Caledonia were added to their number in 1928. Nor is the assimilation anything like complete in the case of the French Colonies to which the full French tariff is nominally applicable. The system is riddled with exceptions, which tend rather to increase than to disappear. The Bokanowski Tariff Law of 1928 indeed introduced fresh facilities for creating exceptions and for giving the Colonial Governments more opportunity to state their views in these matters. It also increased the favours enjoyed by the Colonies of the second group, which have the liberty to devise their own tariffs, subject to the approval of the home Government. In spite of these modifications of more liberal tendency, however, the dual system set up in 1892 remains. Protests have not been wanting. The commercial interests of Marseilles have steadily maintained their demand that the whole plan of applying the French tariff to the Colonies should

be abandoned. To the idea of starting with the French tariff and then making exceptions in favour of the Colonies they oppose the idea of making a special tariff for each Colony, taking account, first, of the general interests of the Colony, and, secondly, of the interests of industries in France. The principal Chambers of Commerce in practically all the Colonies of the first group have repeatedly asked for tariff autonomy. Petitions and protests have alike met with very imperfect success. Official policy, doubtless backed by French industrial interests, has not suffered revolutionary change. The present position is that, while the march towards the ideal of 1892 is suspended, if not abandoned, some of the vices of the Zollverein remain.

There is no need to belittle the French achievement in the economic organisation and development of the Empire as a whole. System or no system, the total expansion in commerce is remarkable. The progress of the ports of Dakar and Casablanca bears witness to the extent of development in Africa, and almost every individual unit in the Empire showed signs of prosperity until the beginning of the world crisis. The question remains as to whether the Customs system has helped or hindered progress. The answer is not doubtful. In the first place, the Colonies of the second group, which enjoy a certain autonomy, have made more successful use of their resources than those of the first group, whose position approximates most closely to the ideal of absorption into the Zollverein. During the twenty years 1887-1907 the total trade of the French Colonies increased by 111 per cent., but the trade of those which were subjected to the tariff of France actually diminished by

16 per cent. The effects of the imposition of the French tariff have ranged, in particular cases, from mere thwarting of development to positive stifling. French Equatorial Africa, whose plight is all the more lamentable by its contrast with the flourishing condition of the neighbouring Belgian Congo, is extremely backward. As long ago as 1910 M. Merlin, an enlightened Governor-General, had the courage to declare that the main cause of the decay was the French tariff. The case of St. Pierre and Miquelon was at one time even more pitiful. From 1892 to 1914 these two little islands, which had drawn their supplies in the most natural way from Newfoundland, Canada and the United States, were held mercilessly within the ring of a tariff designed for the benefit of manufacturers living 3000 miles away. Compelled to accept French goods free of duty and to raise an almost insurmountable wall against their neighbours and suppliers, these fishermen gave up the struggle. In the course of a few years one-third of the population emigrated. It was not until a decree granted tariff autonomy that the one industry of the islands was saved from extinction. In contrast with these unfortunate Colonies, French West Africa, which has a moderate tariff of its own imposed on a certain number of commodities with a preferential rate in favour of goods from France, has attained a relatively large measure of prosperity.

It is impossible to resist the conclusion that a deliberate attempt has been made to divorce territories from their customary sources of supply and substitute French trade for that already established with other countries. It would almost seem indeed that the sternest effort was put

forth precisely in those parts of the world where the French Colonies had the most flourishing relations, as customers, with non-French markets. The French tariff cannot bring about a complete separation of Indo-China from Hong-Kong, but it can and does make the Colony pay dearly for the continued connection. In the case of Madagascar the old and important importation of cotton manufactures from European countries other than France has been entirely stopped. Up to May 1928, even with a 35 per cent. duty, cotton goods to the value of 6,000,000 francs were imported from foreign, and only 600,000 francs' worth from France. But the duty was then raised to 45 per cent., and the whole of the trade passed into the hands of French manufacturers. This was all very well for Rouen, but the price of cotton goods became grievously high for the natives of Madagascar. At the same time, and as a counterpart to this policy of imposed protection, the home Government has in several cases shown its determination to defend the French market against possible competition from the Colonies. There is, for instance, an import duty on Tunisian wines, which are good ordinary wines capable at their best of holding their own in comparison with those of Algeria or the Beziers district of France. At one time, as a result of successful negotiations of the Italian Government, Tunisian wines were actually subjected to a higher duty than Italian wines. That is no longer the case, but an import duty remains and, more serious still, the quantity of wines which Tunisia is allowed to send to France is limited to a definite quantity fixed every year. It is difficult to imagine a provision less encouraging to a young industry. Many other

Colonial products are similarly restricted to fixed contingents.

It is plain that French Colonial policy is destined in the near future to play a much more considerable part in general politics than in any previous period. Already the native movements in Indo-China are beginning to test the sincerity and the scope of the policy of association. In the economic conditions which seem likely to prevail in the world for some time to come, the trading and tariff relations between the mother-country and the Colonies can hardly fail to be brought into question. But there is another aspect of Colonial policy which alone would suffice to focus the attention of French statesmen and of the French Parliament. For good or ill, the Colonies have entered into the military system. There is no conception of national defence, of whatever school, which does not regard the Colonies and Protectorates of North and West Africa as forming, in effect, an integral part of France in time of war. Between 1914 and 1918 the whole Empire sent to France more than 500,000 soldiers and nearly 200,000 civilian workers. Leaving out Algeria, which is a French department, no fewer than 237,000 soldiers and 54,000 workers were furnished by Morocco and Tunisia and the various colonies of West Africa. The success in bringing to the European theatre of war so great a force, largely by improvised means of recruiting and transport, was a lesson which France could not neglect. Military experts went about repeating the saying of General Mangin that "France is a country of a hundred million inhabitants." Politicians bent over the complex problem of sea communications, of transport across the Sahara, of the conflicting claims of



the army and the African labour markets to the services of natives of military age. Naval authorities began to press for submarines to protect the Mediterranean sea routes. Numerous experiments were made with different kinds of motor vehicles to discover the most practical liaison between Algeria and French West Africa, separated from each other by a thousand miles of desert. The project of a trans-Saharan railway, the dream of a generation of engineers and explorers, was given serious consideration by Government. After making proper allowance for undue optimism there is no doubt whatever that France means to rely in a serious degree on North Africa, and rather less certainly on West Africa, to provide her with troops in time of war. In the Report which Colonel Fabry made to the Chamber of Deputies in 1925 it was estimated that the total contribution of the Colonies and Protectorates to the military forces of the Empire in time of peace would amount to 206,500 men, of whom about 106,000 would come from North Africa, and a further 52,000 from West Africa. In most of the Colonies about half the number of troops raised would be for service in the interior of the Colony. It is scarcely necessary to insist upon the importance of the scheme of military service separately considered, or upon the place it will inevitably occupy in the Colonial policy of the future.

# APPENDIX

## CONSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIC LAWS

### LOI

#### RELATIVE A L'ORGANISATION DES POUVOIRS PUBLICS

(25 février 1875)

ART. 1. Le pouvoir législatif s'exerce par deux assemblées : la Chambre des députés et le Sénat.

La Chambre des députés est nommée par le suffrage universel, dans les conditions déterminées par la loi électorale.

La composition, le mode de nomination et les attributions du Sénat seront réglés par une loi spéciale.

ART. 2. Le Président de la République est élu à la majorité absolue des suffrages par le Sénat et par la Chambre des députés réunis en Assemblée nationale.

Il est nommé pour sept ans. Il est rééligible.

ART. 3. Le Président de la République a l'initiative des lois, concurremment avec les membres des deux Chambres. Il promulgue les lois lorsqu'elles ont été votées par les deux Chambres ; il en surveille et en assure l'exécution.

Il a le droit de faire grâce ; les amnisties ne peuvent être accordées que par une loi.

Il dispose de la force armée.

Il nomme à tous les emplois civils et militaires.

Il préside aux solennités nationales ; les envoyés et les ambassadeurs des puissances étrangères sont accrédités auprès de lui.

Chacun des actes du Président de la République doit être contresigné par un ministre.

ART. 4. Au fur et à mesure des vacances qui se produiront à partir de la promulgation de la présente loi, le Président de la

République nomme, en Conseil des ministres, les conseillers d'État en service ordinaire.

Les conseillers d'État ainsi nommés ne pourront être révoqués que par décret rendu en Conseil des ministres.

Les conseillers d'État nommés en vertu de la loi du 24 mai 1872 ne pourront, jusqu'à l'expiration de leurs pouvoirs, être révoqués que dans la forme déterminée par cette loi. Après la séparation de l'Assemblée nationale, la révocation ne pourra être prononcée que par une résolution du Sénat.

ART. 5. Le Président de la République peut, sur l'avis conforme du Sénat, dissoudre la Chambre des députés avant l'expiration légale de son mandat.

En ce cas, les collèges électoraux sont réunis pour de nouvelles élections dans le délai de deux mois, et la Chambre dans les dix jours qui suivront la clôture des opérations électorales. (Ce dernier paragraphe a été ainsi modifié par la loi du 14 août 1884.)

ART. 6. Les ministres sont solidairement responsables devant les Chambres de la politique générale du Gouvernement, et individuellement de leurs actes personnels.

Le Président de la République n'est responsable que dans le cas de haute trahison.

ART. 7. En cas de vacance par décès ou pour toute autre cause, les deux Chambres réunies procèdent immédiatement à l'élection d'un nouveau Président.

Dans l'intervalle, le Conseil des ministres est investi du pouvoir exécutif.

ART. 8. Les Chambres auront le droit, par délibérations séparées, prises dans chacune à la majorité absolue des voix, soit spontanément, soit sur la demande du Président de la République, de déclarer s'il y a lieu de réviser les lois constitutionnelles.

Après que chacune des deux Chambres aura pris cette résolution, elles se réuniront en Assemblée nationale pour procéder à la révision.

Les délibérations portant révision des lois constitutionnelles, en tout ou en partie, devront être prises à la majorité absolue des membres composant l'Assemblée nationale.—La forme républicaine du Gouvernement ne peut faire l'objet d'une proposition de

révision.—Les membres des familles ayant régné sur la France sont inéligibles à la Présidence de la République. (Ce troisième paragraphe a été ainsi complété par la loi du 14 août 1884.)

Toutefois, pendant la durée des pouvoirs conférés par la loi du 20 novembre 1873 à M. le maréchal de Mac-Mahon, cette révision ne peut avoir lieu que sur la proposition du Président de la République.

ART. 9. Le siège du pouvoir exécutif et des deux Chambres est à Versailles. (Abrogé par la loi du 20 juin 1879.)

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## LOI

### RELATIVE A L'ORGANISATION DU SÉNAT

(24 février 1875)

NOTE.—By the Law of August 14, 1884, the National Assembly declared that the first seven Clauses of the Law of February 24, 1875, which provided among other matters for the appointment of life Senators, were no longer to have a Constitutional character. It was thus made possible to repeal these Clauses, and to amend the organization of the Senate, by an ordinary Law. Thus was done by the enactment of December 9, 1884. Of the original Law of February 24, 1875, there remain the following four Clauses, two of which embody important Constitutional rules :

ART. 8. Le Sénat a, concurrement avec la Chambre des députés, l'initiative et la confection des lois. Toutefois, les lois de finances doivent être, en premier lieu, présentées à la Chambre des députés et votées par elle.

ART. 9. Le Sénat peut être constitué en cour de justice pour juger soit le Président de la République, soit les Ministres, et pour connaître des attentats commis contre la sûreté de l'État.

[ART. 10 and ART. 11 no longer have any point, being concerned merely with the arrangements for bringing the Law into force in the first instance.]

## LOI

PORTANT MODIFICATION AUX LOIS ORGANIQUES SUR L'ORGANISATION  
DU SÉNAT ET LES ÉLECTIONS DES SÉNATEURS

(9 décembre 1884)

NOTE.—*This enactment has not the standing of a Constitutional Law. Several of the clauses are not of general interest, and the full text is given only in the case of Clauses of material importance in determining the composition and mode of election of the Senate. One purpose of the Law was gradually to extinguish life Senatorships and to make the Assembly wholly elective. The second paragraph of Article 1 provides for the transition from one system to the other. The Law at the same time modifies the provisions of a further Organic Law of August 2, 1875, prescribing detailed arrangements for Senatorial elections.*

ART. 1. Le Sénat se compose de trois cents membres élus par les départements et les colonies.

Les membres compris, sans distinction entre les Sénateurs élus par l'Assemblée nationale ou le Sénat et ceux qui sont élus par les départements et les colonies, conservent leur mandat pendant le temps pour lequel ils ont été nommés.

[ART. 2. Fixes the number of Senators for each department.]

[ART. 3 makes arrangements for the filling of vacancies among the original body of life Senators.]

ART. 4. Nul ne peut être sénateur s'il n'est Français, âgé de quarante ans au moins et s'il ne jouit de ses droits civils et politiques.

Les membres des familles qui ont régné sur la France sont inéligibles au Sénat.

ART. 5. Les militaires des armées de terre et de mer ne peuvent être élus sénateurs. [Marshals of France, Admirals, certain general officers, and officers and men belonging to the territorial army or to the army and naval reserves are excepted from this provision.]

ART. 6. Les sénateurs sont élus au scrutin de liste, quand il y

a lieu, par un collège réuni au chef-lieu du département ou de la colonie, et composé :

- 1° Des députés ;
- 2° Des conseillers généraux ;
- 3° Des conseillers d'arrondissement ;
- 4° Des délégués élus, parmi les électeurs de la commune, par chaque conseil municipal. [Follow certain rules fixing the number of delegates of a municipal council according to the size of the council.]

ART. 7. Les membres du Sénat sont élus pour neuf années. Le Sénat se renouvelle tous les trois ans, conformément à l'ordre des séries de départements et colonies actuellement existantes.

[ART. 8 and ART. 9 modify or formally repeal certain provisions of the Laws of February 24, 1875, and August 2, 1875.]

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## LOI

### CONSTITUTIONNELLE SUR LES RAPPORTS DES POUVOIRS PUBLICS

(16 juillet 1875)

ART. 1. Le Sénat et la Chambre des députés se réunissent chaque année le second mardi de janvier, à moins d'une convocation antérieure faite par le Président de la République.

Les deux Chambres doivent être réunies en session cinq mois au moins chaque année. La session de l'une commence et finit en même temps que celle de l'autre.

Le dimanche qui suivra la rentrée, des prières publiques seront adressées à Dieu dans les églises et dans les temples pour appeler son secours sur les travaux des Assemblées.<sup>1</sup>

ART. 2. Le Président de la République prononce la clôture de la session. Il a le droit de convoquer extraordinairement les Chambres. Il devra les convoquer, si la demande en est faite, dans l'intervalle des sessions, par la majorité absolue des membres composant chaque Chambre.

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph of Art. 1 was repealed by the Law of August 14, 1884

Le Président peut ajourner les Chambres. Toutefois, l'ajournement ne peut excéder le terme d'un mois, ni avoir lieu plus de deux fois dans la même session.

ART. 3. Un mois au moins avant le terme légal des pouvoirs du Président de la République, les Chambres devront être réunies en Assemblée nationale pour procéder à l'élection du nouveau Président.

A défaut de convocation, cette réunion aurait lieu de plein droit le quinzième jour avant l'expiration de ces pouvoirs.

En cas de décès ou de démission du Président de la République, les deux Chambres se réunissent immédiatement et de plein droit.

Dans le cas où, par application de l'article 5 de la loi du 25 février 1875, la Chambre des députés se trouverait dissoute au moment où la Présidence de la République deviendrait vacante, les collèges électoraux seraient aussitôt convoqués, et le Sénat se réunirait de plein droit.

ART. 4. Toute assemblée de l'une des deux Chambres qui serait tenue hors du temps de la session commune est illicite et nulle de plein droit, sauf le cas prévu par l'article précédent et celui où le Sénat est réuni comme cour de justice ; et, dans ce dernier cas, il ne peut exercer que des fonctions judiciaires.

ART. 5. Les séances du Sénat et celles de la Chambre des députés sont publiques.

Néanmoins, chaque Chambre peut se former en comité secret, sur la demande d'un certain nombre de ses membres, fixé par le règlement.

Elle décide ensuite, à la majorité absolue, si la séance doit être reprise en public sur le même sujet.

ART. 6. Le Président de la République communique avec les Chambres par des messages qui sont lus à la tribune par un ministre.

Les ministres ont leur entrée dans les deux Chambres et doivent être entendus quand ils le demandent. Ils peuvent se faire assister par des commissaires désignés, pour la discussion d'un projet de loi déterminé, par décret du Président de la République.

ART. 7. Le Président de la République promulgue les lois dans le mois qui suit la transmission au Gouvernement de la loi définitivement adoptée. Il doit promulguer dans les trois jours les lois

dont la promulgation, par un vote exprès dans l'une et l'autre Chambre, aura été déclarée urgente.

Dans le délai fixé pour la promulgation, le Président de la République peut, par un message motivé, demander aux deux Chambres une nouvelle délibération qui ne peut être refusée.

ART. 8. Le Président de la République négocie et ratifie les traités. Il en donne connaissance aux Chambres aussitôt que l'intérêt et la sûreté de l'État le permettent.

Les traités de paix, de commerce, les traités qui engagent les finances de l'État, ceux qui sont relatifs à l'état des personnes et au droit de propriété des Français à l'étranger, ne sont définitifs qu'après avoir été votés par les deux Chambres. Nulle cession, nul échange, nulle adjonction de territoire ne peut avoir lieu qu'en vertu d'une loi.

ART. 9. Le Président de la République ne peut déclarer la guerre sans l'assentiment préalable des deux Chambres.

ART. 10. Chacune des Chambres est juge de l'éligibilité de ses membres et de la régularité de leur élection ; elle peut seule recevoir leur démission.

ART. 11. Le bureau de chacune des deux Chambres est élu chaque année pour la durée de la session et pour toute session extraordinaire qui aurait lieu avant la session ordinaire de l'année suivante.

Lorsque les deux Chambres se réunissent en Assemblée nationale, leur bureau se compose des président, vice-présidents et secrétaires du Sénat.

ART. 12. Le Président de la République ne peut être mis en accusation que par la Chambre des députés et ne peut être jugé que par le Sénat.

Les ministres peuvent être mis en accusation par la Chambre des députés pour crimes commis dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions. En ce cas, ils sont jugés par le Sénat.

Le Sénat peut être constitué en cour de justice par un décret du Président de la République, rendu en Conseil des ministres, pour juger toute personne prévenue d'attentat commis contre la sûreté de l'État.



Si l'instruction est commencée par la justice ordinaire, le décret de convocation du Sénat peut être rendu jusqu'à l'arrêt de renvoi.

Une loi déterminera le mode de procéder pour l'accusation, l'instruction et le jugement

ART. 13. Aucun membre de l'une ou de l'autre Chambre ne peut être poursuivi ou recherché à l'occasion des opinions ou votes émis par lui dans l'exercice de ses fonctions.

ART. 14. Aucun membre de l'une ou de l'autre Chambre ne peut, pendant la durée de la session, être poursuivi ou arrêté en matière criminelle ou correctionnelle qu'avec l'autorisation de la Chambre dont il fait partie, sauf le cas de flagrant délit.

La détention ou la poursuite d'un membre de l'une ou de l'autre Chambre est suspendue pendant la session, et pour toute sa durée, si la Chambre le requiert.

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